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Content SEO

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Colophon

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
This book	7
The very basics of SEO	9
Keyword Strategy	14
The importance of keyword research	16
How to execute your own keyword research	19
Long term keyword strategy	29
The importance of long tail keywords	33
How to choose the perfect focus keyword	38
Site Structure	43
Why is site structure important?	45
Setting up your site structure	49
Quick wins to improve your site structure	58
Cornerstone Content	62
Content Writing	65
Writing for websites	67
Why is quality content important?	71
The process of good writing	74
Text objectives	82

How to add structure in your article	89
Style	96
Writing while using the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin	102
Epilogue	110
About the authors	111



Introduction



About this section

In this first section, we will introduce the topic of this eBook. Above that, we will give a short introduction to general Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This introduction to SEO is useful for the understanding of the remainder of this eBook.



Search Engines like Google scroll text. They decide largely on basis of words whether or not your site will rank in their result pages. High quality text thus should be very important in your SEO strategy. Of course your website should be very nicely designed and the user interface should be amazing. And all the technical stuff that makes your site able to rank in Google should also be totally covered. But still, without text, ranking is impossible. It thus is very important to write quality content! In this book we will help you to optimize the content of your website for SEO purposes.

This book covers the most important topics for content SEO. In our view, there are three major topics to consider in order to produce content that will make your website rank: [keyword strategy](#), [site structure](#) and [writing amazing content](#).

Content of this book

This book is divided into four sections. The sections can be read in any order you like, but the most logical order is to begin in section 1 and stop reading after you've finished section 4. The information is non-technical and can be read by anyone owning or maintaining a blog, website or webshop.



We try to cover the basics, but also provide more in depth information on every topic. For advanced readers, some basic information will be common knowledge and could be skipped altogether. Chapters are all written by [Joost de Valk](#), SEO expert and [Marieke van de Rakt](#), blogger, scientist and writer.

In this first section we will give some background information about SEO. The second section of this book is about [Keyword Strategy](#). We will guide you through the process of deciding on what terms you would like to rank on. In the third section, which is about [Site Structure](#), we will help you set up the proper structure for your website. And finally, in the fourth section about [Content Writing](#), we will give practical tips on how to write attractive and well-written texts.

Search engine - terminology

In this book, we will often write ‘*Google*’ when we refer to a search engine. Of course, there are many other search engines, like Bing and Yahoo. But since Google pretty much dominates the search engine market, we will only refer to Google in our texts.



The very basics of SEO

This chapter

Content writing should be a very important part of your SEO strategy. To understand why and to provide some context to the content of this eBook, we will introduce the very basics of SEO in this chapter.

What does Google do?

How does Google find your site?

Search engines like Google follow links. They follow links from one web page to another web page. A search engine like Google consists of a crawler, an index and an algorithm. A crawler follows the links on the web. It goes around the internet 24 / 7 and saves the HTML-version of a page in a gigantic database, called the index. This index is updated if Google has come around your website and found a new or revised version of it. Depending on the traffic on your site and the amount of changes you make on your website, Google comes around more or less often.

For Google to know of the existence of your website, there first has to be a link from another site in the index – one it already knows – to your site. Following that link will lead to the first crawler-session and the first save in the index.



Google's secret algorithm

After indexing your website, Google can show your website in the search results.

Google has a specific algorithm that decides which pages are shown in which order. How this algorithm works is a secret. Nobody knows exactly which factors decide the ordering of the search results. Moreover, factors and their importance change very often. Testing and experimenting gives us a relatively good feel for the important factors and the changes in these factors.

Google's results page

Google's result page shows 7 or 10 links to sites which fit your search the best. We refer to these results as the organic search results. If you click to the second page, more results are shown. Above these 10 blue links are two or three *paid* links, most of the time. These links are ads; people have paid Google to put these links at the top of the site when people search for a specific term. Prices for these ads vary greatly, depending on the competitiveness of the search term. Similar ads could appear on the right of Google's search result pages as well.

The value of links for search engines

It's very important to have a basic understanding of how Google and most other search engines use links: they use the number of links pointing to a page to determine how important that page is. Both internal links (from the own website) as well as external links (from



other websites) could help in the ranking of a website in Google. Some links are more important than others: links from websites that have a lot of links themselves are generally more important than links from small websites with little external links.

Universal search

Next to the organic and the paid results, Google also embeds news items, pictures and videos in its search results. This embedment is called universal search.

What is Search Engine Optimization?

High ranking in organic search results

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the profession that attempts to optimize sites to make them appear in a high position in the organic search results. In order to do so, SEO tries to fit a website to Google's algorithm. Although Google's algorithm remains secret, almost a decade of experience in SEO has resulted in a pretty good idea about the important factors. In our view, the factors in Google's algorithm can be divided into two categories:

- 1 There are *on-page* factors which decide the ranking of your website. These factors include technical issues (e.g. the quality of your code) and more textual issues (e.g. structure of your site and text, use of words). The textual issues will receive in depth attention in this book. For more information about technical issues, check out our blogs about (technical) [SEO](#).



2 There are the *off-page* factors. These factors include the links to your site. The more other (relevant) sites link to your website, the higher your ranking in Google will be. We will not go into off-page factors in this book. You can read more about link building and other off-page factors in the eBook written by Paddy Moogan. [Get it here](#).

Make an awesome website!

In the following chapters, we will teach you how to do proper content SEO. At Yoast, we give SEO advice to (small) website owners and large consultancy clients (the Guardian, Facebook). Joost de Valk began his career in SEO over 8 years ago. And although Google has changed its algorithm quite a few times, most of the advice we give at Yoast has remained the same over the years. And this advice is very simple: you just have to make sure your site is very good. Do not use any ‘tricks’, because they usually don’t work in the long run, and might even backfire. Google’s mission is to build the perfect search engine that helps people find what they are looking for. Making your website and your marketing strategy fit this goal is always the way to go. You can read more about making and maintaining a great website in our [previous eBook](#).





Yoast is most famous for the [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#) (WP SEO). Most of the technical aspects of SEO you should do are actually covered by our free WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin. If you are a WordPress user, installing the plugin and using the default settings already improves your SEO quite a lot. The next step is to optimize your content. That's what we will teach you in this eBook!





Keyword Strategy



About this section

In this section, we will explain the importance of keyword research and of developing a keyword strategy. We will cover quite some theory about keyword research, branding, mission and strategy. This in depth background information will enable you to keep your keyword and content SEO strategy up to date in the long run.

Also in this section, we will give very practical tips on how to execute your own keyword strategy. We will take you through the process of executing your own keyword research step by step, provide concrete examples of keyword research and introduce handy tools you can use.



The importance of keyword research

This chapter

In this chapter, we will give information about what keyword research is and why it is that important. This will make it possible for you to read the remainder of this section without any difficulties.

What is keyword research?

Keyword *research* can be defined as the activity you undertake in order to come up with an extensive list of keywords you would like to rank for. Keyword *strategy* can be defined as all the decisions you make on the base of that keyword research.

Keyword research is the basis of all search marketing. It starts with explaining what you do in the language your audience uses. Keyword research furthermore helps you to discover what you should be ranking for, or aiming to rank for.

In our view, keyword research has three steps. First, you write down the mission of your business. Next, you make a list of all the keywords you want to be found on. Finally, you create landing pages for all keywords. In the next chapter, we will take you through these three steps in much more detail.



After completing your keyword research, you should have a clear overview of the terms people use and the terms you want the pages on your site to be found on. This overview should function as a guidance for writing content on your website. In [section 4](#), you can read more about content writing.

Why is keyword research important?

Proper keyword research will make clear what search terms are used by your audience. And this is of great importance. At Yoast, we regularly encounter clients that have a specific set of words they use when referencing their products, while their users use a completely different set of words. Optimizing for words that people don't use of course doesn't make any sense. Doing good keyword research makes sure that you use the words your target audience uses, and therefore makes the whole effort of optimizing your website worthwhile.

Some terms we use in this section

Keywords and keyphrases

We tend to use the word keyword all the time, but we don't necessarily mean it's only one word. 'WordPress SEO' is a keyword, as is 'Google Analytics plugin'. You can thus have keywords containing multiple words! We will refer to these keyphrases as keywords throughout this chapter.



Long tail keywords

The longer (and more specific) search terms are, the easier it will be to rank on the term. Keywords that are more specific (and often longer) are usually referred to as long tail keywords. Long tail keywords are more specific and less common. They focus more on a niche. In [chapter 6](#) of this section, we will discuss long tail keywords in more detail.



How to execute your own keyword research

This chapter

In this chapter we will take you through the entire process of executing a keyword research step by step. We will give practical tips you can use to start doing your own keyword research. In the [next chapter](#), we will focus on how to integrate keyword research as a long term marketing tool within your organization.

Step 1: What is your mission?

Before starting anything, you will have to think about your mission. You have to think about questions like: who are you and what is your website about? What makes it special? And what promise do you make on your website?

A lot of people can't answer these questions effectively at first. So take your time. Once you are able to answer these questions in detail, you have taken the first and most important step in your keyword strategy.

Businesses are born of ideas, some of which are great, some are not. But they're all born out of the idea that what you have to offer



is special, and adds something to the market. That benefit, that advantage, that *promise*, is bound to be reflected in the keywords people should be finding you for.

Step 1 in keyword research is thus to write down your own mission. You have to figure out what makes you stand out from the rest. Take the time and literally write down your mission on a piece of paper. A computer or an Ipad of course will do as well.

To consider: the competitiveness of the market

Whether or not your mission will prove to be genius enough to sell to people, largely depends on the market you are in. Some markets are highly competitive, with large companies dominating the search results. These companies have a very large budget to spend on marketing in general and SEO specifically. Competing in these markets is hard, therefore ranking in these markets is also hard.

Perhaps you sell cruises to Hawaii. You offer great facilities for children, making the cruises especially suitable for young parents or single moms. Offering great cruises to Hawaii for single moms could very well be the uniqueness of your service. Look for the thing that makes your product stand out from the others. This should be your mission, your niche; this is what you have to offer your audience!

Starting in a competitive market, probably means that you should start out small. Once you ‘own’ a small part of that niche and become a big name in the business of cruises to Hawaii, you could try to go



one level up and sell your cruises to a larger (more general) audience. Your mission will then become much more general as well.

Step 2: Making a list of keywords

With your mission in mind, you should try to get into the heads of your potential buyers. What will these people be looking for? What kind of search terms could they be using while looking for your amazing service or product? Ask yourself these questions and write down as many answers as you possibly can.

If your mission is clear, you will have a rather clear image of your niche and your unique selling points (the things that set your business apart from others). These will be terms you want to be find for.

To consider: make sure keywords fit your site

Be aware that you should be found for terms that fit your site. If we get crazy and do our very best to let yoast.com rank for ballet shoes, people would be rather disappointed to find our site. They will probably instantly go back to Google. Ranking on ballet shoes will, in our case, lead to a massive bounce rate. And a high bounce rate tells Google that people do not find what they are looking for based on that search term. This will inevitably lead to a lower ranking on ballet shoes for our site (and totally justified, we know nothing about ballet or about shoes for that matter).



Tools you can use

Making a list of possible search terms remains hard. And up until a few years ago, doing your keyword research was much easier. You could simply check Google Analytics to see with which terms people found your website. Unfortunately, that is no longer possible. So you're pretty much left in the dark about the terms people use in search engines to end up at your website. Luckily, there are still some other tools which make your keyword research a bit easier:

Google Adwords Keyword Planner

Use the [Google Adwords Keyword Planner](#) to find new and related keywords, but ignore the search volume data unless you're advertising on these keywords! The search volume data in the planner is really only accurate for keywords that you're actually spending money on for advertising. Otherwise, these volumes are not reliable. While not really helpful to decide which keyword is most used by your potential audience, Google Adwords Keyword Planner does make a useful tool in coming up with ideas for potential keywords.

Yoast suggest

Yoast developed his own keyword research tool to come up with keywords as well. [Yoast Suggest](#) uses the Google Suggest functionality you know from searching in Google. It finds the keyword expansions Google gives and then requests more of them. So if you type 'example', it'll also give you the expansions for 'example a...' through 'example z...' etc. Just go on and try it and fill out some of



your potential keywords. It's a great way to quickly find more long tail keywords you can focus on.

Google Trends

[Google Trends](#) allows you to compare the traffic for sets of keywords. You can even see the difference for numerous geographical regions. It's very important to check Google Trends if you expect that some of your keywords are seasonal, for instance due to regulations, holiday seasons etc.

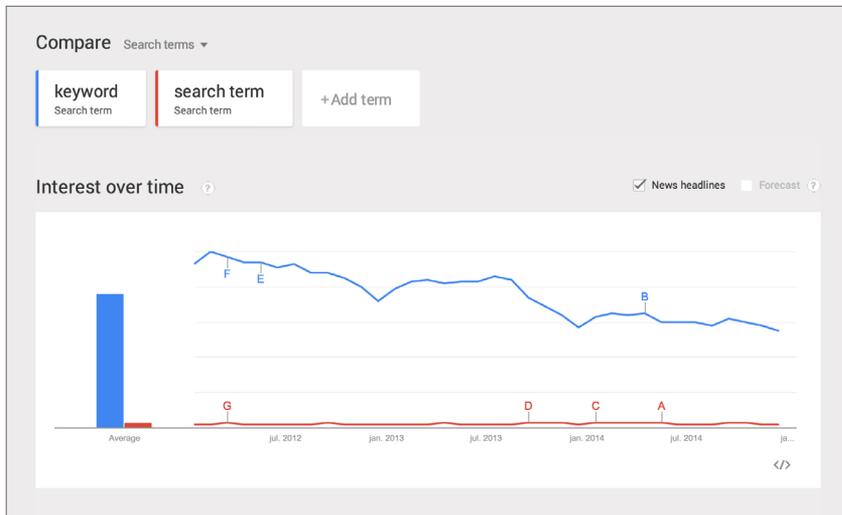


Figure 1: compare traffic for sets of keywords in Google Trends



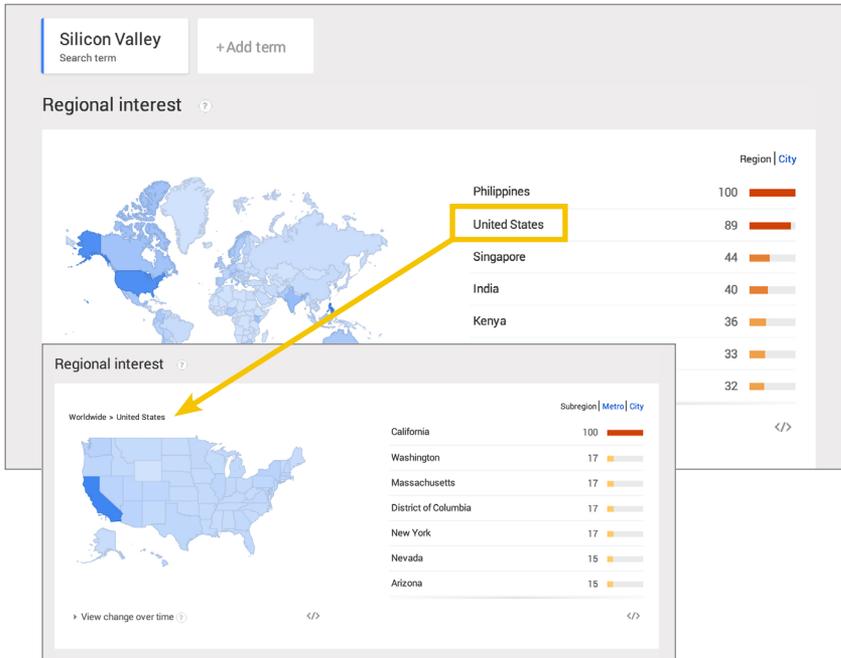


Figure 2: difference for geographical regions

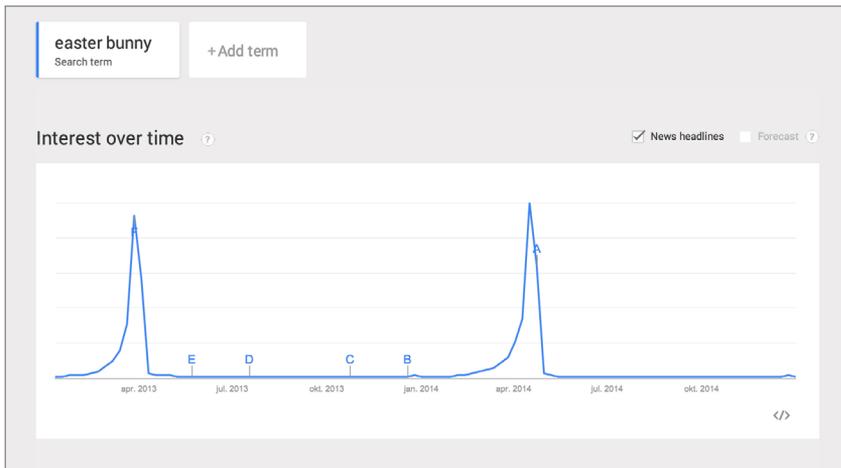


Figure 3: 'easter bunny', a seasonal keyword



Your internal search engine

What are people looking for on your site? These terms are keywords in the vocabulary of your actual audience and should definitely be added to your keyword list. Do not forget to look at the keywords people filled out that didn't get any results: this was something people were expecting but didn't find. You can look into the results of your internal search engine with Google Analytics. Our [Google Analytics by Yoast plugin](#) makes this very easy.

These tools will help you to set up an extensive list of keywords. Try to come up with combinations of keywords as well. And add some kind of priority. Which keywords are especially important to rank on (very close to your mission) and which ones are less important.

Step 3: Construct landing pages

The third step towards a long term keyword strategy is to create awesome landing pages for keywords you want to be found on. We would advise you to do that in a well structured manner. Start by putting the list of keywords you have made in a table. A table (use for instance Excel or Google Docs/Sheets to set one up) forces you to set up a structure and to make a landing page for all the search terms you came up with. Put the search terms in the first column and add columns in which you put the different levels of your site's structure.

The more specific your search term is, the further down into your site structure you put your landing page of this term. Make sure that you



make a landing page for every search term you come up with. You do not have to create all these pages immediately. This could very well be a long term thing. In the [third section](#) of this book (about site structure) you can read much more about the way to set up (or adjust) your site structure.

Search terms	level 1: homepage	level 2: /subpages	level 3: /sub/subpages	level 4: sub/sub/subpages
term 1				
term 2				
term 3				
term 4				

Figure 4: search terms

Example of a keyword research

The theory of keyword research can be a bit dry and hard to digest. That's why we will spice things up! We'll give you an example of steps 1 to 3. Let's say that I have a blog about children. I write about children's clothes, children's room and children's toys. I blog about new products, about things that I have bought and like and about new trends.

Step 1: mission

My mission is to describe the latest trends about clothing, decoration and toys for children.



Step 2: keywords

children's clothes

children's clothes trends

children's room

children's room accessories

children's room furniture

children's room accessories trends

children's decorations

children's decorations trends

children's toys

children's toys trends

Step 3: pages

Search terms	level 1: homepage.com	level 2: /subpages	level 3: /sub/ subpages	level 4: sub/ sub/subpages
Children's clothes		homepage.com/clothing		
Children's clothes trends			/clothing/ trends	
Children's room		homepage.com/room		
Children's room accessoires			/room/ accessoires	
Children's room accessoires trends				/room/acces- soires/trends

Figure 5: pages

Now, of course... Did we make the right choice?



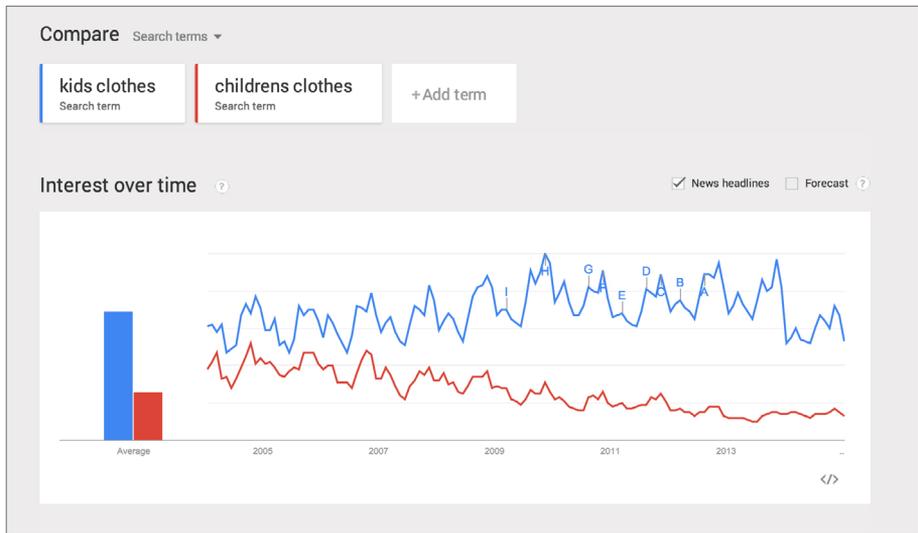


Figure 6: Google Trends, 'kids clothes' versus 'childrens clothes'

As you can see from [this Google Trends chart](#), 'kids clothes', for instance, is actually used far more often. Which means we could go after the probably less competitive, 'children's clothes' etc. anyway, or go for 'kids clothes'. There are no rights or wrongs in this regard, you just have to be aware that you're making this decision. In the next chapters, we will tell you more about how to make decisions about which keywords to aim at.



Long term keyword strategy

This chapter

No website should rely on one single keyword or one keyphrase for its traffic. You should use your mission as a starting point, take our three steps in doing proper keyword research and work towards a solid base: a keyword strategy. In this chapter, we will explain what a keyword strategy is and why it is important to have a long term keyword strategy.

Keyword research and keyword strategy

Keyword research is the activity you undertake in order to come up with an extensive list of keywords you would like to rank for. Your keyword strategy is a bit broader than just that. It can be defined as all the decisions you make on the base of your keyword research. What keywords do you want to rank for? How many? And what is your long term plan? Will you aim at the same keywords, or will you start with long tail keywords and go after more general keywords in the long run?

How many keywords?

It is very hard to give an exact number of keywords one should focus on. And then again, it is very simple. You just have to have a large number, as large a number that is feasible for you. More than a 1000 keywords is probably more than you can chew off.



Even if you're a reasonably small business, you'll probably end up with a couple hundred keywords. But you don't have to have pages for all of these immediately. The great thing about having a Content Management System (CMS) like [WordPress](#) is that you can incrementally add content. Think about what keywords you would like to rank for now, and which ones aren't that important (yet). Make some kind of priority and plan the creation of your content.

Head or tail?

It's important to classify your keywords. Some keywords are very common (*head*), while others are definitely long tail. You should distinguish your most important high level keywords, the ones that have sufficient traffic for your business and connect the best with your business. You should only have a few of these general keywords for your business. The rest of them are bound to be more down the tail. In the [next chapter](#), we will give more in depth information about long tail keywords (and the importance of these keywords).

Content focussing on the most common keywords should be on the most common pages on your website (homepage and the pages one level beneath your homepage). Content focussing on long tail keywords should be more in the tail of your website as well. In the next sections, we will give detailed information about [content](#) and [site structure](#).



Adapting your keyword strategy

Your keyword strategy isn't static. It should change and evolve alongside your company or your website. It should adapt, grow with you. If it doesn't, you're doing it wrong.

You should be on top of the changes in your company and adapt your strategy simultaneously. If your webshop starts selling new products, you should extend your list with more keywords. If you are aiming for new markets, your keywords should be aimed at these new markets as well.

It could be a strategy to start off trying to rank for long tail keywords and aiming at more general keywords afterwards. But you could also aim for more long tail keywords after focussing on general ones. You could deepen your focus (pursuing more niche activities) or broaden your focus, doing more different things. And you can do both at the same time.

At Yoast, we have deepened our focus in SEO. We started out with a general SEO plugin, but made special [Local SEO](#), [News SEO](#) and [Video SEO](#) plugins (niches) afterwards. We first aimed to rank for SEO and later added local SEO, News SEO and Video SEO to our keyword list. We thus went from focussing on general products, to more niche products.

At the same time, we broadened our focus as well. We published an [eBook](#), which was totally new to our company and made our clientele somewhat different. Launching a totally new products, meant adding new keywords as well.



Your company or website will inevitably change. And thus will the keywords you should be aiming at. We therefore advise you to repeat your keyword research every now and then to stay on top of things!

Ad hoc keyword strategies

In an ideal world, you would do your keyword research, make a beautiful table and create landing pages. Your site structure (see [next section](#)) would be flawless and you would blog and write every day making your site rank higher and higher in Google. Unfortunately, we live in the real world.

Of course, your keyword research will not always be as extensive. And some posts or articles aren't written as part of an awesome strategy, but just because the topic was in the news or you had some inspiration. That's just how these things work. But that doesn't have to be a problem.

If you are writing something that does not fit your strategy (exactly), this doesn't mean you should not aim at making that content rank. Perhaps you can use it to rank on something which remotely relates to the terms in the list of your keyword strategy. Use tools like [Google Trends](#) to choose for which keyword you would like to rank on. At least take some time to think about how to fit your article or blog in your strategy. After all, if you are writing valuable content, you might as well let it rank!



The importance of long tail keywords

This chapter

In this chapter, we will specifically focus on the importance of long tail keywords in your keyword strategy. In a highly competitive market, long tail keywords are indispensable. We will explain what long tail keywords are, why they are that useful and how you can incorporate these in your keyword strategy.

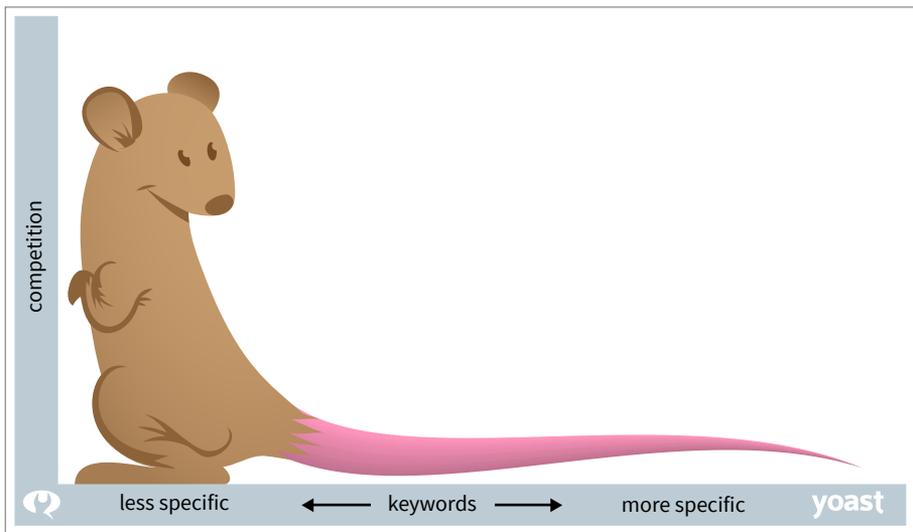
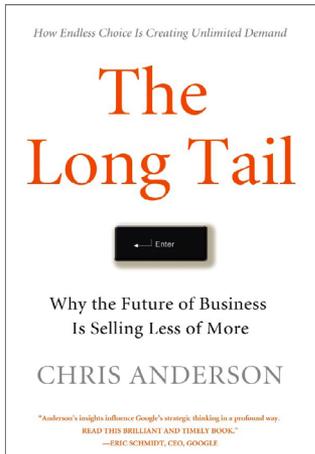


Figure 7: long tail: the more specific your keyword, the less your competition



Why is it called long tail?



The term *long tail keyword* comes from the book *The Long Tail* by Chris Anderson. In this book Chris Anderson discusses the emergence of markets (specifically markets on the internet) with unlimited supplies. He discovered that the true shape of demand, not filtered by the economics of scarcity, shows a very long tail (see picture above). This means that demand exists for virtually every niche, although this demand can become very small.

A nice example could be a jukebox with 10,000 songs. A very small amount of songs will be played very regularly, while a very large amount of songs will be played very few times. However, research shows that virtually all songs (about 98 %) are played at some point. The demand for these songs (which are large in number) is very small, but it does exist. Almost every song will be played at some point. With the emergence of the internet, possible target audiences became quite large, even if the product is only wanted by a very small percentage of the people. The wideness of the internet thus makes your niche product profitable and the ranking on long tail keywords important.



Why should you aim to rank for long tail keywords?

Long tail keywords thus are more specific and less common. They focus more on a niche. In our view, there are two important reasons why one should focus on long tail keywords: easy ranking and higher conversions.

Easy ranking

It is much easier to rank for long tail keywords than for more common keywords, because fewer websites will compete for high rankings in the result pages of Google. The longer (and more specific) search terms are, the easier it thus will be to rank on the term.

If you are starting a new company or website, it could be very beneficial to start ranking on specific long tail terms. As long as these terms are closely related to your mission, you are aiming at the right public. You could try to dominate a number of long tail markets first and then try to start ranking on more competitive markets (with a larger public).

In other cases, focussing on long tail terms could also be a great strategy. Because of the vastness of the internet, you will find your audience relatively easy for your specific niche. Focussing on a group of long tail keywords will result in a great deal of traffic altogether. Long tail keywords therefore could also be a part of your keyword strategy (next to focussing on more common keywords).



Higher conversions

Another benefit of focussing on long tail keywords is that the visitor that finds your website is more likely to buy your service or product. The longer and more specific the search terms are, the higher the chances of conversion are. People who use a very specific term have a more clear idea of what they are looking for. And people who know what they are looking for are much more prone to buying! Long tail keywords thus focus on a small group of people, but also on a small group of motivated people. And that makes focussing on long tail keywords very profitable.

I will explain this using an example: I am currently looking for a cottage in France to spend our next summer vacation. I started my search with the term '*vacation France*'. I quickly discovered I wanted to go to the Dordogne, and preferred a house in the countryside. My search still continues, but now I use terms like '*vacation house countryside Dordogne*'. A long tail keyword. Using this keyword, I found new sites, which more closely resembled my vacation wishes. Chances for me to book my vacation largely increased.

The relativity of long and longer

Long tail is a relative term. For a large website, dominating in the field of sports for example, long tail search terms could be sport shoes or sport clothes. The major *head* keywords of such a website would then for example be sports. For smaller, more niche companies operating in the field of sports, long tail keywords could be '*trendy*



women sport shoes’ and *‘colorful sport clothes*’. The major keywords for this site would then for example be *‘trendy sport supplies*’.

What is long tail for one website, thus does not have to be long tail for another. It all depends upon the position of your business and of your website in the field of your expertise.

Conclusion

The definition of your mission, in which you make crystal clear what the awesomeness of your product, site or blog is, should be central in choosing the long tail keywords you want to rank for. Trying to make your website rank for a specific term can be quite profitable, as long as this specific term closely resembles the products you’re selling. People using the exact terms of your mission and finding your website might be relatively small in volume, but these people do have the highest chances of buying your product or becoming regular visitors.



How to choose the perfect focus keyword

This chapter

If your keyword strategy has been crafted properly and your content is nicely optimized for the right keywords, adding content will increase your findability. Our [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#) will guide you in the process of optimizing for the keyword of your choice (see [chapter 18](#)). In this chapter, we will help you to choose your perfect focus keyword.

In the final phase of your keyword research, just before or while you are writing your text, you should do some last checks in order to make sure the focus keyword of your choice is the right one! In our opinion, there are at least three things you should do before publishing your amazing blog post:

1 Choose a focus keyword that is used to search

Your keyword strategy should have given you solid ideas for the keywords of your post and pages. For blog posts, you will usually aim for a long tail keyword (containing multiple words).

In our WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin you will find a drop down menu which completes your entry with suggestions. These suggestions



Focus Keyword:	?	Word
SEO Title:	?	wordreference wordpress word count wordle
Meta Description:	?	words with friends cheat word unscrambler word of the day words that start with x

are actually based on Google Suggest. This is exactly the same as what you'd see when you type the search term into a Google search box.

The terms you will find in the suggest drop down menu are thus terms and combinations of words that are logical and used by actual people searching the web. This tool can be very helpful in giving you some first ideas about the search behavior of people in the area you want to write about.

2 Discover some information about search volume

Once you have found a (long tail) search term you would like to start ranking for, you should put some effort in investigating whether the search volume of your focus keyword is high or not. We will be the first to admit, Google has made this really hard. The only way to know 'for sure' how often a search term is used, is by having an active and alive [AdWords](#) account and by bidding on the search term of your choice. We understand this is a bit too difficult and expensive for most of you (we honestly hardly ever do this ourselves).

Not to worry, using [Google Trends](#) should give at least some idea, in a creative way, about search volume. Google Trends allows you to compare the search volume of two search terms over time. This will give some insights in the volume of the search terms people use (always relative to another term).



You can use Google Trends in two ways. If you already have some (blog) posts that rank well for the right terms, you will know how many visitors these posts attract. Using Google Trends to compare the focus keywords of older posts (of which at least the number of visitors to your website is known) with the focus keyword you have in mind for your new post, could give you some idea about the potential of traffic this new focus keyword could potentially have. Make sure to choose older posts that are the most similar to the post you are planning to write: if you are planning to choose a long tail keyword, compare posts with long tail focus keywords as well.

For instance, a post about *'focus keywords'* could be compared to a [post](#) about *'snippet previews'*, a very related feature of the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin we wrote about in 2014:

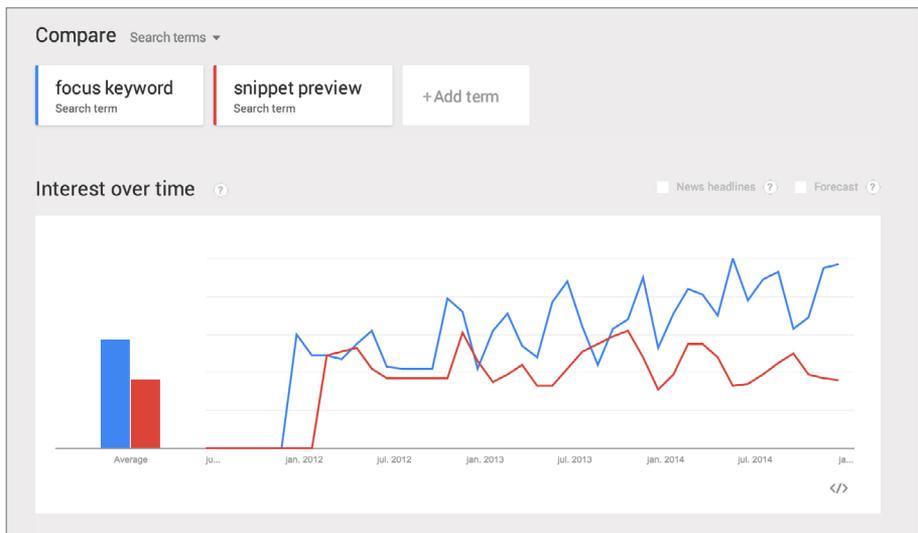


Figure 8: Google Trends, *'focus keyword'* versus *'snippet preview'*



As you can see the traffic is similar. We know the search traffic to our snippet preview post is reasonably good, so we know it's worth optimizing for.

Using Google Trends to compare between your old focus keywords and the one you would like to use for your current post will give you some insights about the prospects for your focus keyword.

The second way to use Google Trends is when you are doubting between a number of (long tail) focus keywords. Google Trends will easily show you what search term will have the highest search volume (compared to another). Google Trends will help you decide which long tail keyword is most common in the search engines.

3 Google your proposed focus keyword!

Apart from knowing which search terms are actually used by people, you need to know whether or not your idea for your post or page fits the desires and expectations of the people who use the search terms. The best way to find out whether or not your content fits these desires is to search for your proposed (sets of) keywords on Google yourself.

Take the time to look at the first two result pages. Are the articles Google shows of the same character as your article will be? Does your website fit in with the results shown in these result pages? If you decide to write your blog post or page, while optimizing for this exact focus keyword, you're aiming for a display of your page amongst these.



Make sure to use the content of the result pages as an inspiration for your blog post. Are there any useful ideas (we are *NOT* encouraging to copy content, merely to see whether you perhaps missed some information or arguments for your own blog post)? But more importantly: how can you make sure your post will stand out? In what way could your post be better, funnier, more original than the posts presently displayed in the result pages? Try to think of content that will make the audience click *and* share!

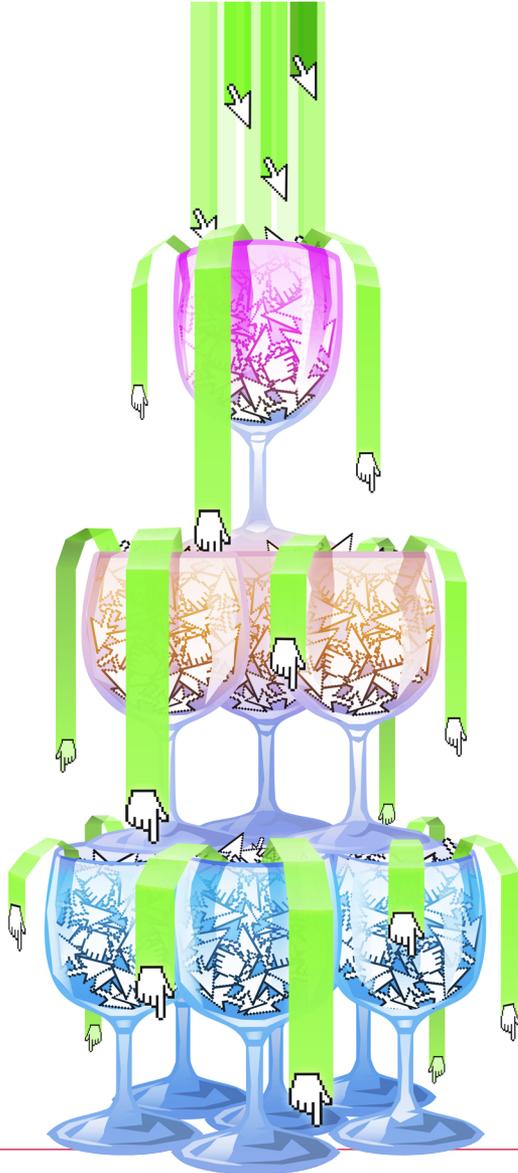
Conclusion: picking a focus keyword is not easy

Choosing a perfect focus keyword is not an exact science. You should aim for a combination of words that are actually used by a search audience. On top of that, aim for a focus keyword that is relatively high on volume.





Site Structure



About this section

In this section we will give advice on how to set up or improve the structure of your site. We will explain why it is important to structure your website wisely. Subsequently, we will show you how to setup an ideal site structure. And, we will provide tips on how to (quickly) improve the structure of your site without totally disrupting the core of your website. Finally, we will give some special attention to cornerstone articles.



Why is site structure important?

This chapter

In the [previous section](#) of this book, we explained all about keyword research. For a lot of people who want to improve their rankings, it makes sense to think about keywords. But what does the structure of your website have to do with your ranking in Google? For many people, this remains unclear. In this chapter, we will therefore try to explain the importance of having a good site structure. In the next chapters of this section, we will explain what an ideal site structure looks like and how you can improve upon your own site structure.

Two reasons why site structure is important

In our opinion, there are two main reasons why site structure is an important ranking factor:

- 1 A decent structure makes sure Google ‘understands’ your site

The way your site is structured will give Google important clues about where to find the most important content. Your site’s structure determines whether a search engine understands what your site is about, and how easily it will find and index content relevant to your site’s purpose and intent. A good site structure could thus lead to a higher ranking in Google.



By creating a good structure, you can use the content you've written that has attracted links from others to help other pages to rank as well. Your site's structure can help spread some of that *link juice* to the other pages on your site. On a commercial site, that means that you can use the quality content you've written to boost the search engine rankings of your sales pages too.

2 A decent structure makes sure you do not compete with your own content

On your website or weblog, you will probably write multiple articles about similar topics. At Yoast, we write a lot about SEO. If we would write eight different articles about SEO, Google would not know which of the articles is the most important one. If we didn't solve this with our site structure, we'd be competing with our own articles for a high ranking in Google. Solving this problem with a good internal linking structure will thus result in higher rankings.

The ideal site structure

In theory, you should build your site as a pyramid. On top of the pyramid is your homepage and under the homepage are a number of other pages (categories). These pages in turn refer to even more pages.



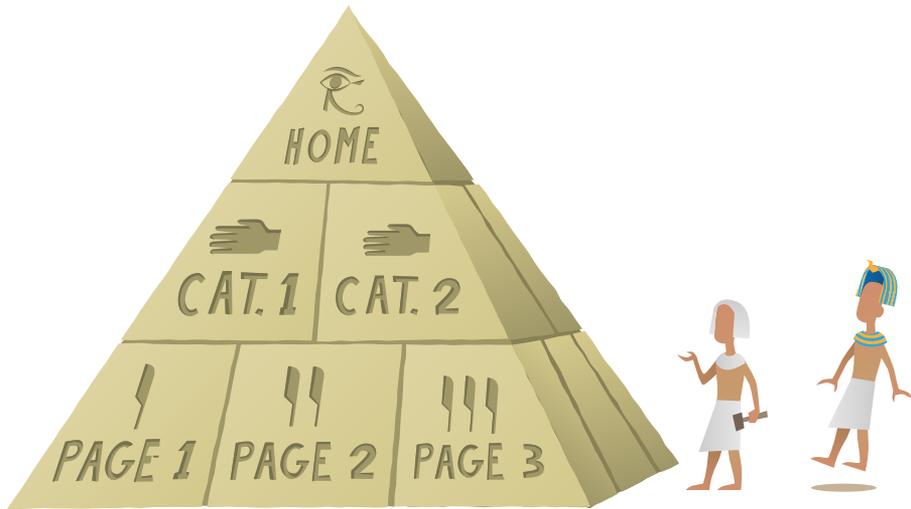


Figure 9a: the structure of your website should look like a pyramid

Focus keyword and site structure

Using the [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#) allows you to choose a focus keyword and to optimize your post using the features of the Page Analysis tool (see section 2, [chapter 7](#) and section 4, [chapter 18](#)). Some people seem to think that every post should focus on the same keyword. This is not the case. In fact, every post should have a *different* focus keyword. Subsequently, posts about similar topics should be linked to each other.

Keyword strategy and site structure

Your keyword strategy and the way you structure your site should be related. In a proper keyword strategy, you would have thought about common, competitive key words as well as more long tail niche search



terms. A similar dichotomy should be made in your site structure. Pages focussing on more common search terms should appear high in your pyramid, while pages optimized for more long tail keywords should appear in a lower part of your site structure. These long tail pages at the bottom of the pyramid should then be linked correctly to the pages higher in the pyramid.

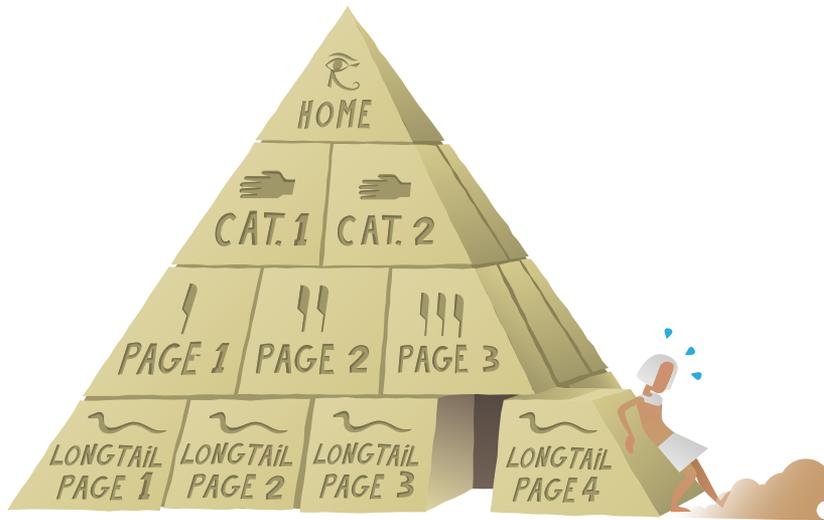


Figure 9b: long tail pages should be at the bottom of the pyramid



Setting up your site structure

This chapter

In this chapter, we will help you to set up an ideal site structure. We'll try to show you how to change the site structure of a site according to an example. This chapter appeared as an article on [yoast.com](#) and as a chapter in our previous eBook: [Optimizing your WordPress site](#).

Creating a pyramid

When developing a new site, or restructuring an existing one, it helps to draw out your site's structure in something like [Visio](#) (or even putting it in Excel). In [step 3](#) (section 2) of executing the keyword research we help you to create such a structure. What you'll want to do is put all the pages and sections of your website in a structure as a pyramid. After drawing your site's structure, you can analyze the faults in the structure of your website.



Based on a yoast.com structure from many years ago, you would draw something like figure 10:

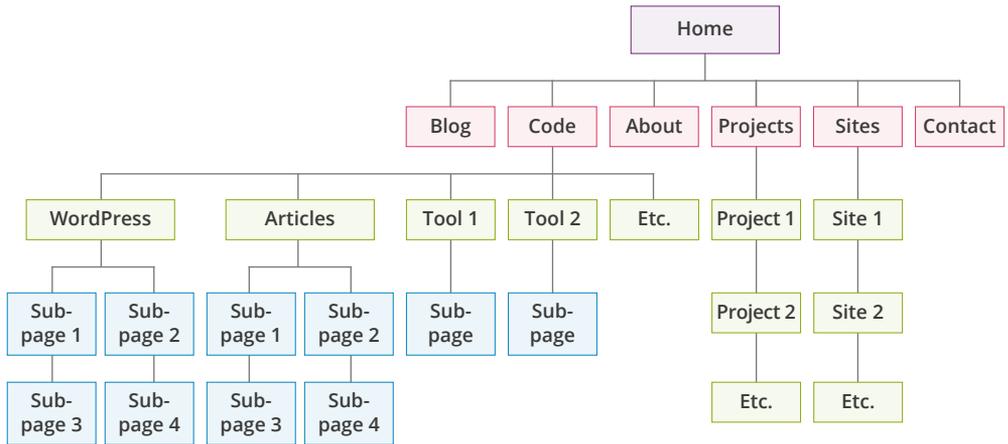


Figure 10: a typical site sketch

Analyzing your pyramid

A balanced pyramid

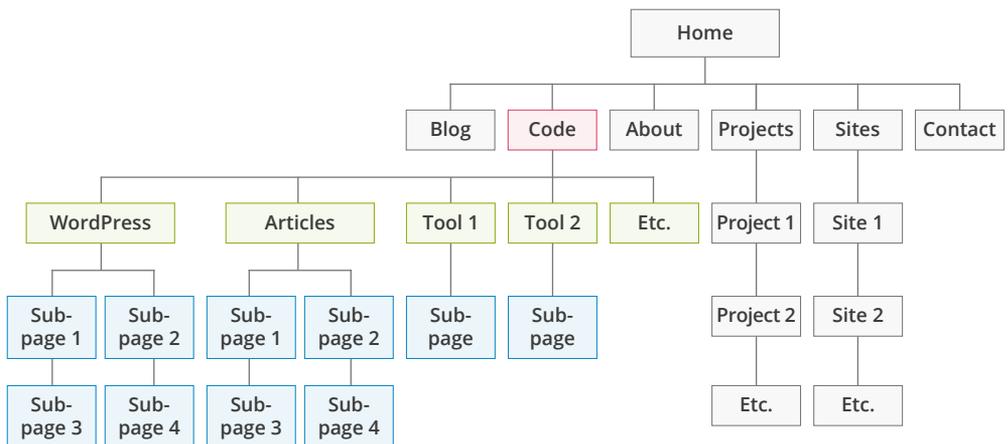
An ideal site structure should look somewhat like a pyramid from ancient Egypt. When working on your site structure, you thus should try to create a reasonably balanced pyramid for your site structure. On the top of the pyramid is your homepage, with links / buttons allowing people to go down to the second level. From the pages on the second level, people are able to navigate to pages on the third level (and so on). As you go down in levels in your website, the number of pages per level will go up. We would advise you to have something between 2 and 7 main sections, depending on how content heavy your site is.



Equally large sections

You can make subsections beneath your main sections. Make sure that sections are about equally large. If sections are too large, you should divide them into two main sections. A good rule of thumb for the size of sections is to make sure that no section is more than twice as large as any other section. Large sections should have a prominent place on your homepage. Indeed, if a section is relatively large, this is apparently something you write a lot of content about. Dividing such a section in two separate ones, would then result in a more accurate reflection of the content on your website.

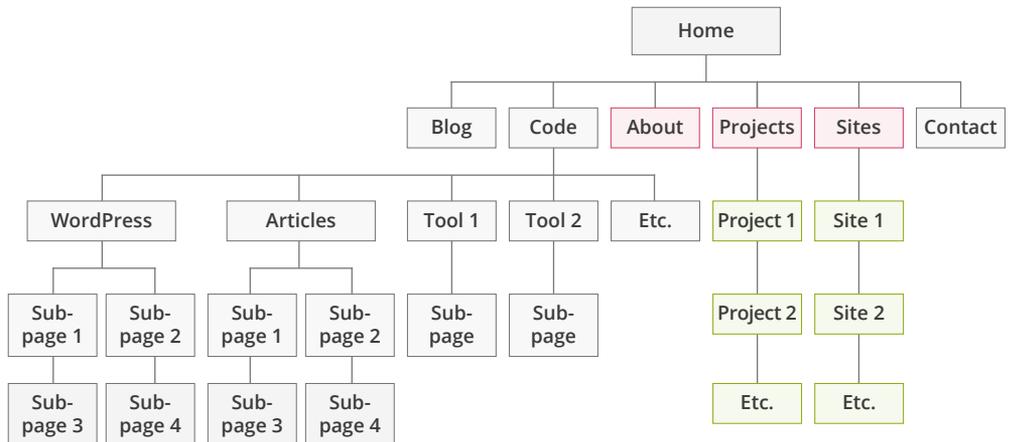
Figure 10 clearly shows that the old `yoast.com` structure was unbalanced. As you can see, the **Code** section constituted more than half of the entire site. So our sections were not at all equally large.



Structure should reflect content

In making your site structure, make sure that the structure reflects the content. Similar things should be grouped together, while things that are in fact different should be put in another section.

*The structure of the old yoast.com was unbalanced did not reflect the content. There were three pages that were basically about Joost de Valk: **About**, **Projects** and **Websites**. These three pages were not very different in content, but were treated differently in structure.*



Traffic

Pages that generate a lot of traffic should have a prominent place on your website. Check your site statistics to see which pages are the most popular. Try to put these pages relatively high in your site structure. These pages apparently attract a lot of traffic and need to be placed high on your pyramid.



In our example, we found out that the WordPress pages were responsible for about 30% of the site traffic, but were down on the third and fourth level.

Designing a new site structure

After you have analyzed the flaws in your site structure you can rearrange sections, and design a new and improved site structure. Make sure you draw a balanced pyramid, giving more popular pages a higher place in the pyramid.

At yast.com, we did exactly that. In figure 11 you can see our new solution.

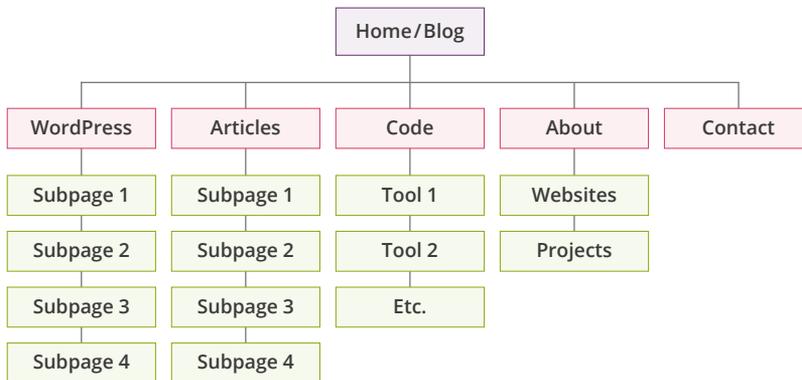


Figure 11: a more refined section structure

*As you can see we decided to move some pages **up** the pyramid, and also removed some pages. When you're rethinking your site structure you'll often find that some pages are not really beneficial to your users. Deleting them is the best thing you can do if that's the case.*



*Another choice we made was to move the blog to the homepage. The homepage was utter nonsense, and basically yet another **About Joost de Valk** page. And although Joost likes himself, that's not what we were hoping people came to our site for.*

Naming your sections

Once you're satisfied with your site structure, have a look at the names you have come up with for your sections. If you have enough content about a subject for it to be able to have its own section, you can bet people are searching for it as well. That's why it's very wise to make sure your section names use the keywords people are searching for! Pick the right names for your sections and subsections, and you're halfway there. Now use the same techniques to pick the titles for your pages, and make sure to keep them short and clean.

*For example, if you're like us and you've written WordPress plugins and created a section for them, you should not call that section **WordPress**. What would people search for? If they want a new plugin for WordPress, they would probably use **WordPress plugins** for a search term. That would also be the term for that section. Our sections had names as shown in figure 12.*



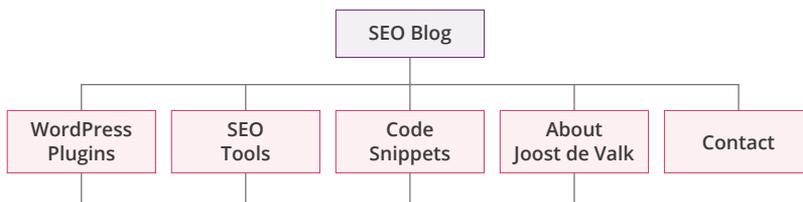


Figure 12: sensible section names¹

Internal link structure

If you did it all right with your new site structure, it should look like a pyramid. Now you should consider how you're going to connect the sections of this pyramid. Look at those sections as small pyramids inside your main pyramid. Each page in the top of that pyramid should link to all its subpages, and the other way around. So, all the subpages within a pyramid should link to the page at the top of that same pyramid.

Because you're linking from pages that are closely related to each other content-wise, you're increasing your site's possibility to rank. Doing it like this, will help the search engine out by showing it what's related and what isn't.

¹ we already updated our site structure again (and again), but this remains the most vivid example.



Take figure 13 as an example:

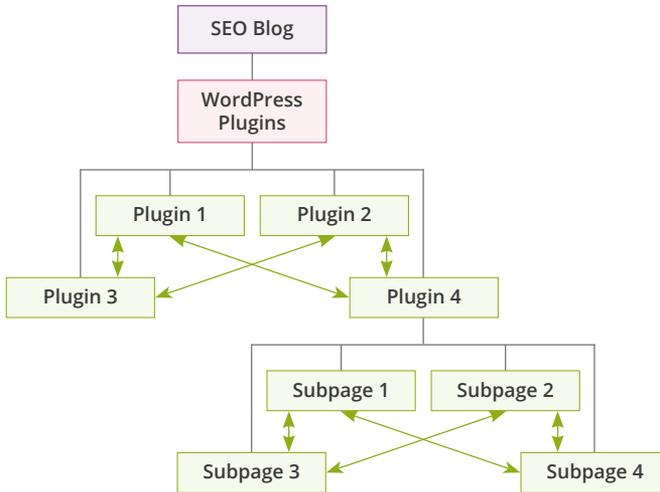


Figure 13: you also need to consider how the pages link to each other within each section.

*You should make sure you keep your links between each page relevant to those pages. For example, if you linked from **subpage 3** to **plugin 2** all the time, the search engine might think that **subpage 3** was related to **plugin 2**, whereas it's only related to **plugin 4**.*

From your new site structure to URLs

Once you've created your new site structure, you can go ahead and create the URLs to go with this structure. Each page's URL should describe the content of that page, yet be as short as possible. If you have determined what keywords you want to rank for, you might include the most important ones in your URLs.



Keep the following things in mind while implementing your new URLs

If you're using multiple words, separate them with hyphens.

- Mixed case URLs are an absolute no-go, as Unix and Linux servers are case sensitive. Having mixed case URLs drastically increases the possibility of typos – have you ever tried remember a URL that /LoOks/LiKe/ThiS/?
- Numbers might be easy for your CMS, but not for your users. Remembering a URL with a number in it is hard, so the chance people will remember it and link to it is smaller – don't use numbers in URLs.
- Make URLs guessable if you can. If people can remember your URLs they can also talk about it with their friends more easily.
- Make sure you redirect all your old pages to their new equivalents using 301 redirects. A 301 redirect is a permanent redirect, and this way search engines will move all the link value from the old URL to the new one. For example, make sure **http://example.com** 301 redirects to **http://www.example.com**, or the other way around, so people always link to the same 'version' of your site.
- Make sure content is available at one URL and one URL only, for example by implementing print stylesheets on your pages. There's no valid reason anymore to have a different page for printing purposes because all major browsers support print stylesheets.



Quick wins to improve your site structure

This chapter

Changing the entire structure of your website can be a bit overwhelming and rigorous for some of you. But if your website is alive and you add content on a regular basis, the structure of your website will automatically change. For instance, some time ago, we started writing about keyword research at yoast.com. Our content about keyword research thus grew rather rapidly. Such a change in content asks for some adjustments in site structure.

These kind of changes of course occur in every website. You should thus regularly evaluate your site structure. Closely monitor changes in focus and content on your website and adapt the structure of your website accordingly. In this chapter we give three practical tips you can use to make quick and easy improvements on your site structure without having to change your entire sites URL structure.

1 Update your internal linking structure

Writing an article about a topic often leads to inspiration to write an article about a similar topic. You should try to optimize for a slightly different focus keyword and link these posts internally. Every time you write a post, you should think about similar posts you have



written and link to these. Of course, you should always link to your most important article about this topic (see [next chapter](#) about cornerstone content).

Yoast Tip:



During your optimization process you should google the focus keyword on your own site using `site:yourdomain.com [focus keyword]`. Everything you find in the first pages of the results should contain a link to your new post.

2 Evaluate your sections

At your homepage you normally have a few sections. You should critically evaluate these sections every few months, asking yourself whether one section is growing faster than another section. If some part of your website is growing much faster than other parts, you could divide such a section in two separate sections.

Example

*Imagine you have a webshop in which you sell outdoor supplies and your categories are **Camping**, **Hiking** and **Sports**. You then add a lot of sport shoes (running and tennis) to your collection making the Sports-category almost twice as big. A proper decision would then be to divide **Sports** into **Sport-clothing** and **Sport-shoes**.*



Just over a decade ago, Joost de Valk wrote his first WordPress blog on joostdevalk.nl. He wrote about internet, HTML, CSS, webkit and SEO. After some time, he found himself writing almost half his stuff about CSS3. He then decided to start an entire new website (CSS3.info). If you are adding a lot of content which does not fit the initial structure of your website at all, it could be a good idea to start another website for this topic which could become an authority in this particular field.

3 Make good use of taxonomies and tags

Your site will get more structure (or at least Google will understand more of its structure) if you make use of the taxonomies WordPress provides. It has two ways of doing this: you can use categories and you can use tags. The difference is that categories are hierarchical, so you can have sub-categories and sub-sub-categories, whereas tags are unstructured. You can consider the categories to be the table of contents of your website, and tags as the [Index](#).

Taxonomies can go wrong!

A lot could go wrong with taxonomies when people start using them randomly. The structure of your taxonomies is important. As taxonomies group your content, you should keep in mind where these could be used, how they are used and where they are linked. Do not create too many categories. Do not create too many tags. Make sure tags are used more than once or twice.





Don't go creating a list of categories longer than Rapunzel's hair. That will mean you have probably gone overboard creating categories. We usually recommend eight to ten categories. If you 'need' more, you might consider adding more taxonomies, not categories. If half of your categories is about people, why not add a 'People' taxonomy instead.



Cornerstone Content

This chapter

Really important content pages are called cornerstone articles. This chapter is about these articles. We will first describe what cornerstone articles actually are. Then we will discuss what kind of content these cornerstone articles should contain. Finally, we will explain how one should incorporate cornerstone content in the site structure.

What are cornerstone articles?

Cornerstone articles are the most important articles on your website. This is the content that exactly reflects your business. These articles should be relatively high in your pyramid, focussing on the most ‘head’ and competitive keywords. If you should think of 4 pages you would like someone to read in order to tell them about your site or company, these would need to be the cornerstone articles. In most cases, the homepage links to these articles. Websites should have a minimum of 1 or 2 cornerstone articles and a maximum of 8 to 10. If you want to write more than 10 cornerstone articles, you should probably begin a second website.



Type of content of cornerstone articles

Cornerstone content should always be content pages. We advise a page and not a blog post. You should make them timeless and update them very regularly to make sure these pages are up to date. Cornerstone articles should be explainers, it should be informative articles. Also on a webshop, the cornerstone content should be informative articles. Perhaps you can write about the use of the products you sell.

Example

If you own a webshop selling special vitamins for dogs, you could write a cornerstone article about the use of vitamins and the effects of vitamins. Making a cornerstone article about dog health could be a good idea too. If you blog regularly about dog health and structurally link to your cornerstone page, you could definitely start ranking on dog health. Others will be much more likely to link to your informative posts about dog health, instead of sales posts about dog vitamins. And the step for readers about dog health to buyers of dog vitamins isn't that big.

Cornerstone content should thus reflect exactly your business or the mission of your business. But focussing on the field around your business could be a fine strategy to increase your audience and potential buyers.



Incorporation in your site structure

The cornerstone articles should appear very high in your sites pyramid. If you add new content relating to the cornerstone topic, you should link from within this new content to your cornerstone article.

For instance, your cornerstone article is about dog health. This is a lengthy article about all things concerning dog health: food, exercise, sleep and so on. If you write a post about taking long walks with your dog in order to keep him fit, you link from this post to your cornerstone article. Also, when you write about a new type of dog food, you should link to your cornerstone article.

Yoast Tip



Make sure that these cornerstone articles, the articles on which people enter your site, have a clear [call-to-action](#). This means that it will be clear at the end of the page (and preferably on the top as well) what you want people to do. Do you want them to keep on reading: lead them to other, preferably related articles. Do you want them to buy your stuff: lead them to your shop. Do you want them to subscribe to your newsletter: offer them a form to sign up.





Content Writing



About this section

There are only very few of us who can write the *Great American Novel*. Writing a well structured text however, can be taught to (almost) everyone. In this section, we will give you some practical tips about writing, rewriting and structuring your text. We will focus on the writing of blog posts or articles on your website. And who knows? After some practice, your blogs will read just as smoothly as the *Great American Novel* did.

We will first explain some basics about writing for websites. In [chapter 13](#) we will explain why high quality content is important for SEO and social media purposes. In [chapter 14](#), we will discuss the process of writing and [chapter 15](#) is about the different aims texts can have. [Chapters 16](#) and [17](#) give practical tips about the structure and the style of your texts. Finally, [chapter 18](#) can be read as a manual to write posts with the [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#).

On [yoast.com](#), Marieke already wrote a post about writing an [awesome blog post](#). If you do not have the time to read this entire section, her post could be a good way to start.



This chapter

Writing an article, whether it is for websites or not, needs some proper thinking. In this chapter, we will explain the main differences between writing for online purposes and writing for conventional purposes.

Why is attractive writing that important?

Writing a blog post or an article on your website – like all other writing – is a skill. In order to keep your reader interested, you should think about structuring your text and write in an appealing style. In [chapter 13](#) of this section, we will explain the importance of attractive writing more in depth.

For many, writing content is only important for SEO purposes. For them, Googlebot is the most important one to ‘read’ your website, not the audience. And Google doesn’t mind crappy style, so why pay much attention to your text?

We argue that for long term SEO purposes, writing attractive texts is very important. If people understand and like your text, they are much more likely to share, like, tweet and link to your post. And this will increase your rankings! So, in order to improve your ranking in Google, you should definitely try to maximize your writing skills and write awesome articles!



Differences between web texts and 'normal' texts

Writing for the web is a bit different than writing for print. And at the same time, it is pretty much the same. In both cases, you need to arouse, persuade or entertain your audience to keep them reading. Because web texts are often read from a screen and people have much more incentives to stop reading (clicking on other links etc.), demands on your writing skills are very high.

You should limit the length of your text as people tend to stop reading if a web text is too long. However, for SEO purposes, your blogs or articles should not be too short (minimum of 300 words). A lengthy article has more chances to rank in the search engines. If you choose to write a lengthy article, one should focus even more on style and structure.

Legibility of web texts

Make sure people can read your texts properly. Reading from screens is hard, so make sure you do not make it any harder than it already is.

Use a decent font size. Using a large font size is important, especially for older people. A large font will help people to read your content better. Use at least 14 px and preferably 16 px, with an appropriate whitespace (1.5em for the larger font sizes, more toward 2em for smaller font sizes). Using more whitespace (to a degree, obviously) has been found to actually increase comprehension of the text in people.



Also make sure the lines of your text aren't too long. Try to keep it limited to 50 or 75 characters per line. The longer the lines, the harder it is for people to understand your message. And finally, choose contrasting colors for your text and your background. Green text on a yellow background tends to read a bit hard.

Keyword research and content writing

Your keyword research should be leading when writing content for online purposes. Of course, in the end, you want to rank with your content. Before starting to write a post, think about what keyword you want the post to rank on. Use the keyword or keyphrases in your post, but do not overdo it! In the [final chapter](#) of this section, we will take you through the process of optimizing your content for SEO purposes.

The pitfall of blogging

One of the reasons WordPress websites usually are able to rank relatively high in Google is because of the blogging structure. A blogging structure makes it easy for website owners to create new content. The threshold to write is very low! Adding content on a regular basis is a great SEO strategy.

Blogging thus indeed is a very good way to keep creating content and to start ranking in the search engines. The easiness of blogging, does have a large pitfall, however. Although publishing content is made easy, writing unfortunately is as hard as it was in the Middle Ages.



Writing remains a skill. It requires skills from its performer, it requires some basic understanding of language and spelling, it requires some creativity, it requires some thinking and reflecting. And, writing web texts requires some basic knowledge about the internet, SEO and user experience as well. The pitfall of blogging is that people quickly create a lot of crappy content. And in the end, that is not a very good SEO strategy at all.

Yoast Tip



Google reads text. For SEO reasons, written text is indispensable. In the following chapters we will therefore focus on text. However, for social media purposes, videos and pictures could well be much more valuable. Especially when your creativity with words is limited, making awesome videos to appeal to your audience could be a great social media strategy as well.



Why is quality content important?

This chapter

Content writing requires some of your creative writing skills. And let's be honest, many blogs are hardly readable and not at all informative, entertaining or inspiring.

We don't all have to be Hemingways. But you should make an effort to write some nice work. Why? In this chapter, we will give you four reasons why the content on your website should be well written and nicely structured.

1 People will understand your message

Whether the aim of your piece is to entertain, to inform or to persuade people, in texts that are poorly written, the aim is lost. People simply will not understand your message.

Every blog, every piece of content on your website has some kind of a message. This message is the purpose of that piece of writing: what do you want to tell your readers? A message can be very small. An article on your website could for instance inform people about the features of your product, or explain the shipping process.



In poorly written pieces, people will be less likely to understand your message correctly. If your content is well thought through, nicely structured and free of misspellings and typos, chances are much higher people understand the messages of your texts.

2 Lower bounce rate

If your content is well written and nicely structured, chances are higher that readers will actually stay on your site to read your text. (And perhaps even buy your product!) That will result in lower bounce rates and will eventually improve your ranking in the search engines.

3 More trust

Well-written pieces will lead to more trust. If your content reads well, it will be easier for people to trust your website. It will come across more professional and legit if the texts on your website are of a decent quality.

If people trust your website, they will be much more inclined to either buy your products (if you have a shop) or, for instance, to return to your website or subscribe to your newsletter.

4 More social media attention

Well-written content has much higher chances to be shared in the social media. For a piece to be shared on social media, you first have



to convince someone to read the piece himself. Apart from that, someone has to find your piece awesome enough to give it his or her personal stamp of approval by sharing it on his or her timeline on Facebook or Twitter (or any other social media). Poorly written pieces will never get much attention on Facebook, because the message is lost in poor writing.

Yoast Tip



You should add social sharing buttons below your content. These buttons should not be styled in some fashionable way, but should look like the commonly used share buttons for better recognition as sharing buttons.

Conclusion: higher ranking and higher conversions

Writing great articles will not instantly improve your ranking. But in the long run it will definitely have a positive effect on your SEO! Attractive texts have lower bounce rates and higher chances to receive social media attention.

Attractive text will also result in higher conversions on your website. If your message is properly understood by your audience, barriers will be much lower for them to buy your products or become returning visitors.



The process of good writing

This chapter

In this chapter, we will take you through the process of writing. It is important to realize, however, that proper writing takes some time. In order to write a good, readable piece, you will have to follow three steps:



Step 1: Preparing

All writing begins with preparation. In the first step of your writing process you will have to answer a number of questions. The answers to these questions will be the preparation of your blog post or article:

- 1 What is the purpose of your piece? Why are you writing?
What do you want to achieve?
- 2 What will be the main message of your post?
What is the central question you want to answer?
- 3 Who are your readers?
- 4 What information do you need to write your piece?
- 5 In what order will you present your information?
What will be the structure of your article?

We will elaborate on these questions in the following paragraphs.



1 What is the purpose?

When you start to write content, you should first take some time to think about the purpose of your writing. Articles can have different purposes. You can write because you want to persuade people: you want them to adopt your political ideas or you want to convince them to buy your product. The aim of your article could also be entertaining. The purpose of your text would then be to amuse people. A column is a good example of an entertaining text. Your blog or article could also be informative. Different articles on your website could have different purposes. Also, many articles have multiple purposes. A blog could very well be informative as well as entertaining.

The purpose of your article will give you some rules or guidelines to follow. An article in which you want to persuade people should have some other features than an article with a sole informative or amusing function. In [chapter 15](#) of this section, we will discuss some special features of an amusing text, an informative text and a persuading text.

2 What is the message?

Before you start writing, take some time to think about what you want your readers to know or do after they've read your text. We refer to this as the message of your text.

In order to come up with your message you could try to phrase a question which your text should resolve. We refer to such a question as the central question of a text. The text you will write, will be the answer to your central question.



Example

If you would write a post about the importance of well structured texts, the central question of this post could be: 'Why is it important to write well structured blog posts?'

Make sure that your central question is clear. Try to come up with a summarized answer to your central question in one or two sentences. We refer to this answer as the message of your article. Perhaps you will not be able to phrase the message of your article until you have done some research. You should then attend to your research first (see [question 4!](#)).

We usually put the message in the introduction of the post (telling people what the post will be about) as well as in the conclusion of the piece. Making your message really explicit is in our opinion especially important in web texts. It helps your readers to instantly grasp the message of your article and increases the likelihood people will keep on reading.

Example

The message of a post about the importance of well structured texts could be: 'It is important to write a well structured text because it will allow people to understand your text better, it will lead to higher conversions and to higher ranking.'



3 Who are your readers?

Before writing your text, you should take some time to think about the people you are writing for. Make sure you adapt your text to their level. You should adjust the difficulty of the information in your piece as well as the difficulty of your style (use of jargon, long sentences etc) to your audience.

In many cases it is really hard to find out who your readers are. And if your audience is a very heterogeneous group (consisting of very different people), it can be quite hard to decide upon the difficulty of your topic and your text. It could be very helpful to do research concerning your audience on a regular basis. If you would like to read more about analyzing your audience you can read Marieke's posts about [Analyzing your audience](#) and [Yoast Research: get to know your audience](#).

4 What information do you need?

In some cases all the information you need to write your text is already in your head. If Joost de Valk writes an introductory piece about SEO, he doesn't need to open any books. In many other cases, you will need some sources (the internet, books, newspapers) to provide the information you need for your text. You should take the central question of your piece and come up with a number of sub questions.



Example

For the central question: 'Why is it important to write well structured blog posts?' one could pose the following subquestions:

- *What does text structure have to do with SEO?*
- *What is the influence of text structure on conversion rates?*
- *What is the influence of text structure on bounce rates?*

Find answers to all your sub questions in your sources (books, internet, scientific articles etc.). You can write these answers down. You will then already have the basis of your post or article.

After this phase, the (central) message of your article should be entirely clear. Take some time to phrase or rephrase your message (the summarized answer to your central question) in one or two sentences.

5 What will be the structure?

The final step in the preparation process is the most important one. You have to give some kind of structure to the information you want to communicate to your readers. In [chapter 16](#), we will give practical tips on how to create a decent structure.

Step 2: Actual writing

After the initial preparation you can start the actual writing process. This will take about 20 percent of the entire time you spend on your blog post.



Just do it!

The most important tip for this phase is: just write. People often have trouble coming up with the first sentence (or the first paragraph for that matter). You can skip writing that first paragraph altogether. Just put down a couple of words referring to the content that first paragraph should have and start writing the second paragraph.

If a sentence isn't grammatically correct or its phrasing isn't pretty, do not stop writing. You will think about alternatives in the last phase of writing. In this phase, it is important to keep yourself in the flow of writing.

Guard your structure

While writing, you should use the structure you have so properly established in your preparation phase (we will help you set up your structure in [chapter 16](#) of this section). Try to write the paragraphs as you have planned to do.

Yoast Tip



The order in which you write the paragraphs does not have to be the same order as you will present them in your final text. It can be very helpful to write 'easy' or 'fun' paragraphs first, just to get you started.



Take a break every now and then!

Writing is a very intensive process. If you write for long periods of time, you will discover that concentrating will become harder. The timespan people are able to write is of course different for every individual.

Marieke isn't able to write longer than 20 consecutive minutes (but to be honest, her attention span is very poor). Then she has to take a walk, look at her Facebook timeline or take a sip from her tea. A little break of only half a minute can be enough to return to your writing afresh and with a renewed level of concentration and creativity.

Step 3: Correcting

After the second step of your writing process you will have a first draft of your text. In most cases, you have now done about 60% of all the hard work. However, the final step will still take much of your time...

This final step is the part in which you should 'kill your darlings'. You should read and re-read and re-re-read your text and correct your awkward formulations, unclear phrasing and inapt paragraph structure.

Re-reading

You can start this phase by reading your piece slowly (and maybe even out loud, this can really help). Each sentence should be grammatically correct and the spelling must be flawless. You should thus be very critical of your own work.



If all sentences in one paragraph are approved, look at the structure within a paragraph. And if the structure within paragraphs is ok, focus on the structure of the entire piece. Is the structure as you have constructed it in advance still the most logical? Or do you need to make some adjustments? Perhaps you have come up with some extra arguments supporting your opinion. This could lead to a change in your structure. You should make sure the structure of your text remains clear and logical. Finally, you should come up with definite headings and subheadings.

[Chapters 16](#) (about structure) and [chapter 17](#) (about style) should give you plenty of practical tips to use in the correcting phase of your writing process.

Ask for feedback

After re-reading and re-writing your text, you should ask for feedback. At Yoast all the posts we write are read by at least two of our colleagues before we publish them online. Feedback allows for the perspective of someone other than the writer(s) and almost always leads to large improvements of your text.

Try to find a person or a number of persons to read your text. It will be really useful to take someone from your audience to test whether or not the message of your text is delivered properly. Also, feedback from someone with proper writing skills will help you improve your text even further.



This chapter

In this chapter, we will focus on the purpose of your text. A lot of people forget to properly formulate the purpose of their blog post or article. This is unfortunate, because if you do not properly define the aim of your text, it will be impossible to check whether or not you have succeeded. You do not write just for the sake of writing but because you have an idea of what you want your audience to know or do (or to stop doing).

Three main text objectives

We distinguish three main text objectives or purposes for blog posts or articles on your website. First, your objective could be to *inform* people. Informative texts should be clear, objective and professional. A second objective could be to *persuade* people. You want people to buy your products or to return to your website. The final objective of your text could be *entertaining*. You could write a text in order to entertain your audience, for instance by making them laugh or by moving them. These three text objectives are not at all mutually exclusive. A piece could be informative and amusing at the same time!



Long term business aims and text objectives

At yoast.com, we write blog posts largely to inform people about SEO. So the objective is to inform people. However, we also want people to become return visitors and to gain trust in our brand. Eventually, the long term purpose of our informing blogs is to gain enough trust for people to buy one of our products.

It is important to know your long term business goals. These business goals should in fact determine what kind of objectives the texts on your website should have. But in order to make a great text, you should try to focus on the objective of that single blog post or article. What do you want people to do after they have read your piece?

Content objectives, relation objectives and link objectives

It is important to realize that with your text, you communicate the literal content of your message, but also something more fuzzy which we might call relation or connection. While writing your blog post, people receive (objective) information, but also some feeling for the author or the website. Perhaps you want people to have a certain feeling about your brand or product. At Yoast, we try to write in an enthusiastic style. Our relation objective is that we hope people will get the feeling we are young and eager to share knowledge. Communicating your relation objective has a lot to do with choosing the style of your blog. The level in which you seek interaction with



your readers in the comments of your blog can be a relation objective. Trying to engage your audience with your brand by directly addressing in your blog can be a smooth tactic.

While some posts or articles will focus merely on supplying information, others are much more suited to focus on transferring a positive relation or a positive engagement as well. It is important to be aware of both the content objective as well as the relation objective you have in mind.

Of course, if the objective of your post is to generate links from others, you should think about the character of your post as well. Persuasive posts, in which the sales arguments are salient, will not receive as many links as purely informative posts will. People will be more likely to share an informative or an amusing post than a purely persuasive post, because these posts are more free of ulterior motives.

Tips to use when focussing on one of the three main text objectives

In the following paragraphs we will give some tips you can use when writing either an informative, a persuasive or an amusing post or article.

Informative texts

In an informative text you explain something to your audience. You want them to understand more about a topic or you want them to



use your information (put theory to practice). That's it. You should take some time to clearly formulate your central question. And an informative text will usually need quite some investigating in order to decide on the exact content of a piece.

The style of an informative text should be clear and professional. You should focus on the message itself and not so much on the relation. Focussing on content will give your text a professional and reliable character. Your style should not be too amicable. It could even be a bit distant.

The structure of an informative text should be clear. A logical structure could be to address a different topic in each paragraph. In the conclusion you could summarize the information of your entire text.

Persuasive texts

A persuasive text is a text a reader doesn't necessarily want to read. The purpose of your text is to persuade your audience to do something (such as buying your product) it wasn't necessarily planning to do. For that very reason, you will understand that writing persuasive texts is very hard.

The style of a persuasive text should be very bold. Your sentences and paragraphs should be short. You can either focus on convincing your audience with emotions or with logic.

If you choose to persuade with emotions, try to use a lot of positive words (like fun, easy, quality). Make your post personal and write



from the perspective of the reader. You could for instance address the reader directly using words as ‘you’ and ‘your’. Anecdotes or stories illustrating the awesomeness of your product are very nice to use if you are trying to convince people by using emotions.

If you want to persuade using logic, you should take some time to write down all of your logical arguments. Make sure you deduce your arguments correctly and make use of examples to illustrate your arguments. Focussing on persuasion using logic calls for a relatively distant and formal style. Of course, you can also choose a strategy in which you combine persuading with emotions and logic.

The structure of a persuasive text should reflect your arguments. Make sure to use separate paragraphs for your arguments (regardless whether you have emotional or logical arguments). Use lots of headings and make sure you use the most important arguments in the titles of your headings.

Further reading

*Social psychologist [Cialdini](#) wrote a very interesting book about influencing people: *Influence*. He distinguishes 6 principles which influence the behavior of people. Although Cialdini's book isn't about writing texts, his principles could help you find ways to persuade people to buy your products. You could definitely use the 6 principles to come up with nice (emotional or logical) arguments to persuade your readers!*

If you do not feel like reading the entire Cialdini book, you could also read some of [Thijs' posts](#) on [yoast.com](#), Thijs has written a lot about conversion, persuasion and Cialdini's principles.



Amusing texts

An amusing text's main objective is to entertain people. Usually these texts tend to be funny. Amusing texts could also be moving or touching. Most novels' main objective is to amuse as well. A column is a very nice example of an amusing text.

Writing solely amusing texts will not be an activity many of you will undertake. Most texts will have both an amusing as well as an informative or a persuasive objective. Blogs on a mom blog often tend to be amusing (at least for women), but usually serve an informative or persuasive objective as well.

Writing in an amusing style is definitely very hard. Some people just have much more talent to be funny, to come up with funny anecdotes or with nice word plays. Perhaps you should not instantly aim for an amusing text, but try to master the informative and persuasive texts first. Using exaggerations and metaphors could be a first attempt to make your text (more) amusing.

Amusing texts usually ask for an informal style. These texts are often very personal, containing the words '*I*' and '*my*'.

The structure of one amusing text can be very different to the structure of the other. The structure should serve the focus and the content of your text, as in all texts.





Writing an amusing text like a column usually asks for a little joke or funny anecdote at the beginning of your text. Try to come back to the same joke or anecdote in the final sentence of your text, preferably by making a little twist. For example, read Marieke's blog (with a largely informative objective, but she likes to make jokes) about [The temptation of the green bullet](#).



How to add structure in your article

This chapter

In this chapter we will give practical tips to help you set up a nice and clear structure for your articles. In [chapter 14](#) we explained the process of writing in three steps. In the final part of the first step – the preparing step – the structure of the text comes around for the first time. It really pays off to think about the structure of your piece before you actually start writing. But, also in the other two phases of the writing process, structure remains of great importance. The structure is the skeleton of your text: it will help the reader grasp its main idea.

In this chapter, we will help you setup your structure while preparing your post, guard your structure while writing and improve your structure in pieces already written.

Set up your structure

Before you begin with setting up your structure, you should have a clear formulation of the central question you would like to answer in your text. We would advise you to put this answer (the message of your text) in the first paragraph of your text. One way or another, you should introduce the message of your text within the first few sentences. Introducing the most important message in the first



paragraph, will make it that much easier for your reader to understand your text. And that is very important for web texts.

Next to having a clear formulation of the main message of your text, you should also have a clear idea about which information you will include in your text (and which information will not be included).

Setting up a structure of your text can be done following these three steps:

Step 1: Create a list

If you have all the information you want to use in your post or article, you can start with structuring. You can write down a list of all the topics (or phrase subquestions / set up short sentences). That list should preferably include everything your text should cover. You could for instance do a brainstorm in order to come up with such a list.

Step 2: Bundling topics together

When you have a clear overview of all the topics you want to discuss in your article, you start bundling topics. Similar topics should of course be discussed together.

Step 3: Sorting topics

If you are done bundling, you should decide upon the order you want to present the topics in your article. In most cases you will decide to sort them thematically. For instance if you want to discuss various



aspects or angles of a certain topic in order to answer your central question. You should then discuss every aspect in a new paragraph.

Next to sorting according to theme, you could also sort chronologically or discuss your topics in a didactic order. Especially when you try to explain complicated material, a didactic order, in which you explain easy stuff first and difficult aspects later could be a very good idea. Another possibility is to introduce and discuss a problem first and offer (multiple) solutions to that problem next.

Type of sorting	
thematic	sorted by theme, aspect, topic
chronological	sorted by old - new
didactic	sorted by easy - hard
problem - solution(s)	introduce problem first - then possible solutions

Figure 14: types of sorting

After you have ordered the topics you want to address in your article, you should make a new list. This list is actually a kind of summary of the article you are about to write. You could write a short sentence or a few words for every paragraph you plan to write. This list is the skeleton of your article and you should keep it well in mind during the remainder of the writing process.



Guarding your structure

After you have set up your structure, you start the next phase of the writing process, in which you start the actual writing. Use the following tips in order to guard your structure while writing.

Writing the first paragraph

In your first paragraph you should make clear what your readers can expect in the text. Readers on websites are easily distracted. Take them by the hand. The final sentence of Marieke's first paragraph usually is: *"In this post I will explain..."*

Creating paragraphs

In the structure you have set up, you have bundled topics together. You can then start to write paragraphs. But what makes a good paragraph? A paragraph can be defined by three things. Remember these things while writing!

- 1 Each paragraph should form a thematic unit.
- 2 Each paragraph contains one core sentence and an elaboration on this core sentence.
- 3 Each paragraph should be made visible (by using whitespace).

Lots of people make mistakes while creating paragraphs. Writers just put some white spaces in their text at random places for esthetic purposes, but do not really think about the coherence and structure of the text. We also see a lot of paragraphs containing only one



sentence. In many cases, the coherence within paragraphs and between paragraphs remains unclear. These kinds of mistakes can really mess up the structure of your articles.

Paragraphs can be short or long. The length of a paragraph is decided by the theme you are discussing. It could be two sentences, but a paragraph could also contain 15 sentences. For writing on websites, we would advise to create short paragraphs (stick to less than 6 or 7 sentences).

For texts on websites, we would advise you to always start your paragraph with the most important sentence. Then explain or elaborate on that sentence. A reader will be able to grasp the most important content from your article, just by reading the first sentences of your paragraphs. You can conclude (longer) paragraphs with a summarizing sentence to make your point extra clear.

Yoast Tip



If you want to explain, or elaborate on, a topic which does not entirely fit the central question of your article, you could use an aside. An example is also a great topic for an aside. An aside is a text frame which is put next to the relevant text. (For an example see text frame [Further reading](#) (chapter 15).



Use of signal words

In order to guide your reader, you should use plenty of signal words. Signal words give direction to your readers. These words show the reader that you are summarizing (*and, too*), comparing (*less than, rather*) or concluding something (*thus, consequently, hence*).

Type of relation	Examples of signal words
enumerate	and, first of all, also, another, furthermore, finally, in addition
cause	because, so, due to, while, since, therefore
comparison/contrast	same, less, rather, while, yet, opposite, much as, either
conclusion	as a result, hence, consequently, therefore, in conclusion
fuzzy signals	seems like, maybe, probably, almost
emphasis	most of all, most noteworthy, especially relevant

Figure 15: examples of signal words

Using signal words will be like putting cement between your sentences. The relation between two sentences becomes clear by the use of signal words. Readers will understand your content much better if you make proper use of these kinds of words.

Help your reader grasp the structure

Grasping the structure of long articles is hard. You should make sure your readers do not get lost. You can do so by putting sentences in your article which guide your readers. If you have three examples



to explain your point of view, tell your readers exactly that: *‘I would like to present three examples to you.’* Subsequently, you will present your three examples using signal words: The first example, the second example, my last example. Structuring your text in such a way (especially when your content is quite hard) will make reading it that much easier.

Headings

Headings are important for SEO purposes. Google uses your headings to determine the topic of the content on your website. Your headings should be used to optimize your post (see [chapter 18](#)). However, headings are of great importance for your readers as well. Headings allow your readers to quickly scan through your text and decide whether or not they would like to read your article (or which parts). Headings should be attractive and should cover the content of the paragraph.

You can use a heading above each paragraph, or above a number of paragraphs which contain similar topics. The headings should reflect the structure of your text. We would advise you to put a heading above every long paragraph (or above a few short paragraphs which are thematically similar).



This chapter

Some of us are natural writers. They are able to write an attractive, fun, readable text in a matter of minutes. Others lack that skill. Attractive writing is a matter of talent, but practice sure helps! In this chapter we will give some tips about how you can upgrade the style of your writing and set up an attractive text.

Read a lot!

If you want to develop a nice style, you should read a lot. Reading (novels, blogs, magazines) will inspire you to write your own great articles. You will learn how other people form their sentences and build their paragraphs. Finally, lots of reading allows you to create a gut feeling about what makes a nicely readable text.

Mix it up!

For a text to be attractive to a reader, it should be very varied. This means that you should try to mix it up a little! Alternate long paragraphs and sentences with short ones and try to use synonyms if you tend to use a word very often. Some people use the word ‘and’ or ‘too’ very often. Mixing it up with ‘also’, ‘moreover’ or ‘as well’ could make a text much more attractive. Making variations in your text can be done on three different levels: *paragraphs*, *sentences* and *words*.



Paragraphs

Mix long paragraphs with short paragraphs, as long as the structure of your text allows for such variation. If you want to elaborate on an example, use an aside. Variation in paragraphs will make your text much more readable.

Sentences

Variations in your text can also be made on the level of your sentences. You can easily make variations in the length of sentences or in the construction of sentences.

Example

A sentence like: 'The most important topic of this post is SEO.' could also be written as: 'SEO is the most important topic of this post.' or: 'This post's most important topic is SEO.'

If you vary the sequence of the words of your sentences, your text will be more attractive to read!

Example

By simply mixing the sequence of words, you can transform this: 'SEO is the most important topic of this post. SEO is a strategy aiming at ranking higher in Google. SEO is not very hard. SEO could be learned by almost everyone.'
Into this: 'The most important topic of this post is SEO. SEO is a strategy aiming at ranking higher in Google. It is not very hard. Almost everyone could learn to do SEO.'



Words

Using the same word over and over again greatly diminishes the readability of your text. Try to use synonyms.

Yoast Tip



You probably would like to use your focus keyword (the keyword on which you want your post to rank) a lot. Using your focus keyword a lot simply is a nice SEO tactic. However, this could make your text very unattractive. More importantly, using your focus keyword too often, could also lead to over optimization (and eventually in a penalty from Google). If you want good synonyms for your focus keyword you should Google your focus keyword.

For instance: if you Google *'Car Insurance'* and look at the results, you will see that Google also bolds the term *'Vehicle Insurance'*. This means that you can use Vehicle Insurance as a proper synonym. Read [chapter 18](#) about our WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin for more info!

Do not write too abstractly

If you are writing an article, you should try to use clear terms. You should try to use words that have meaning to people, words people can visualize. Writing about staff and employees remains abstract, while writing about the secretary and the handyman has more meaning. *Search Engine Optimization* is a very abstract concept, while *ranking high in Google* will immediately make clear what you mean. Of course, you will need some abstract terms and words in your article,



but make sure you explain these terms by using concrete terms as well. Adding examples could also do the trick.

Choose a formal or informal style

Most web texts are not very formal. At yoast.com, we try to write in an enthusiastic manner. We are all young, our company is young and constantly changing, and we very much like what we are doing. We think an enthusiastic style fits our audience. We directly address our readers and often ask for their opinion or feedback. The (level of) formality of your style is a matter of personal taste and a matter of the taste of your audience. There aren't really any rights or wrongs in this matter.

Use metaphors and expressions

A picture can say more than a thousand words. Using metaphors can be a great way to spice up your text. A metaphor describes a phenomenon using a description that has a different literal meaning. If we say someone is as cold as ice, we all know we do not literally mean the person is physically made of ice. Using metaphors or expressions can make your text more specific and more fun to read. Do not go overboard though: writing a blog post with 50 metaphors is too much.



Avoid passive voice

Use of the passive voice (see figure 16) results in very distant writing. In sentences in a passive voice, it remains unclear who or what is acting or doing something. Texts using a lot of passive voice tend to be hard and unattractive to read. Avoid using the passive voice altogether (or at least as much as you can).

In some cases, you deliberately use the passive voice. Some scientists for example refuse to write the words I or We and use the passive voice to resolve this issue. In most cases, you could rewrite your sentences rather easily making them more specific and more enjoyable to read.

Recognizing passive voice is hard for many writers. They use passive voice without even noticing it themselves. Almost every text editor (like Word) have a grammar check that helps you recognize the passive voice. You only have to come up with a better alternative then!

Passive voice	'Active' alternative
The bags are checked by a security employee.	A security employee checks the bags.
The participants are informed about their financial contribution	The director informs the participants about their financial contribution.
All our posts are checked by a colleague.	A colleague checks all our posts.
All our posts are checked by a colleague.	I analyzed the data using a statistical package.

Figure 16: use of passive voice



Ask for feedback and /or use a tool

We recently discovered a really awesome tool to help with your writing. You can put (a piece) of your text in the [Hemingway-app](#) (with a free online version) and it analyzes your text immediately. It analyzes among other things whether or not your sentences are too long or too difficult and whether you use passive voice.

Another way to make sure your text is any good is to ask your neighbor, friend or a colleague to read it before you publish it. If someone gives you fair feedback, you will be able to make big improvements on your writing skills.



Writing while using the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin

This chapter

So now you have composed a blog or an article almost as beautifully written as Salingers *The Catcher in the Rye*. You now want to make sure your post ranks in search engines. In this final chapter about writing content, we will guide you through the Page Analysis tool in the [WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin](#).

The Page Analysis Tool

The Page Analysis Tool of the WordPress SEO by Yoast plugin measures many aspects of the text you are writing. It helps you to make your text SEO-friendly. We will describe the most important features of the Page Analysis Tool. In the following paragraphs, we will explain in more detail how to use and interpret these features.

- 1 The plugin allows you to formulate a meta description. This description has to be a short text which indicates the main topic of the page. If the meta description contains the search term people use, the exact text will be shown by Google below your URL in the search results.
- 2 The plugin analyzes the text you write. It calculates a [Flesch reading ease score](#), which indicates the readability of your article. The



Flesch reading ease score takes the length of sentences into account, for example.

- 3 The plugin does numerous checks. It checks whether or not you used your keyword in 5 important locations: the article heading, the title of the page, the URL of the page, the content of the article and the meta description. The plugin also checks the presence of links in your article and the presence of images in the article. It calculates the number of words and the density of usage of the focus keyword in the article. Apart from that, the plugin also checks whether or not other pages on your website use the same focus keyword, to prevent you from competing with yourself.

If you write a text which is relatively SEO-friendly (based on the aspects mentioned before) the plugin will indicate this with a green bullet. Writing pages that are awarded green bullets will help you improve the ranking of the pages on your website.

Two warnings before you start!

While optimizing your post for a certain keyword, you should keep two things in mind. The first thing is that in this phase (the final, optimizing phase) you should not change any major things in your article. You have put effort into writing an attractive, structured and readable text and the optimization process should in no way jeopardize the excellence of your text.

The second thing is that you should not change your keyword strategy in this phase. If you have done your keyword research properly



and you have written your post or your article with a focus keyword in mind, don't go changing your focus keyword now! Read [The temptation of the green bullet article](#) for more in depth information about that.

We will now describe the optimization process in 7 simple steps.

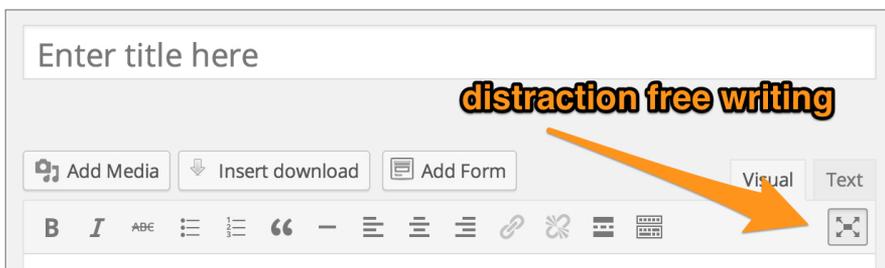
Step 1: Put your text in the WordPress backend

You have written your article or your blog post. You can write directly in the backend of WordPress or write in any kind of text editor and copy your text into the WordPress backend. Do whatever you like! If you choose to copy your text in the WordPress backend, choose to copy *without* the layout and adapt your layout in the WordPress backend. Make sure to set subheadings into *heading 2*, sub sub headings to *heading 3* and so on. Then put the title of your post in the title box.

Yoast Tip

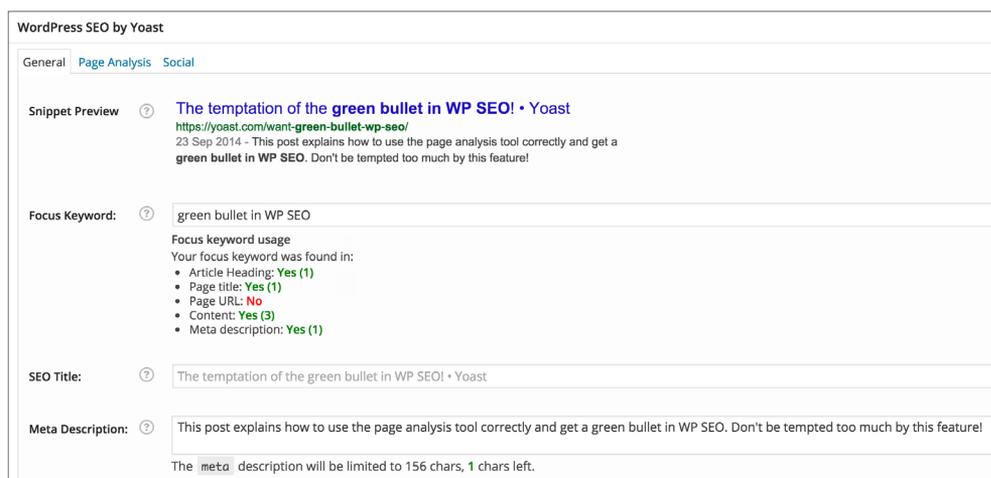


WordPress has a distraction free writing mode that enables you to write in the WordPress backend without being distracted by the menu, the toolbar, the categories box, etc.



Step 2: Enter your focus keyword

Scroll down to the Page Analysis Tool in the WordPress backend and enter your focus keyword in the appropriate box. As explained before, your focus keyword thus is the keyword you would like your post to rank on. Ideally, this should be a keyword which emerged from your keyword research and which you have kept in mind during the entire writing process.



The screenshot shows the 'WordPress SEO by Yoast' interface, specifically the 'Page Analysis' tab. It displays a snippet preview for the article 'The temptation of the green bullet in WP SEO! • Yoast' with a URL and a date. Below this, the 'Focus Keyword' field contains 'green bullet in WP SEO'. A 'Focus keyword usage' section lists where the keyword was found: Article Heading (Yes 1), Page title (Yes 1), Page URL (No), Content (Yes 3), and Meta description (Yes 1). The 'SEO Title' field contains 'The temptation of the green bullet in WP SEO! • Yoast' and the 'Meta Description' field contains 'This post explains how to use the page analysis tool correctly and get a green bullet in WP SEO. Don't be tempted too much by this feature!'. A note at the bottom indicates that the meta description is limited to 156 characters, with 1 character left.

Figure 17: Page Analysis Tool, General tab

You could have written a post or an article not only because you would like to rank, but because you had some news you wanted to share with your audience. In this case, you may not have a clear focus keyword before writing. [Chapter 7](#) of section 2 could help you to choose a proper focus keyword.



Step 3: Write the meta description

Enter the meta description of your post. Make sure you use the exact phrasing of your focus keyword in the meta description and give a clear description of what your post or article is about. The meta description will be shown by Google below the URL if people search for your focus keyword.

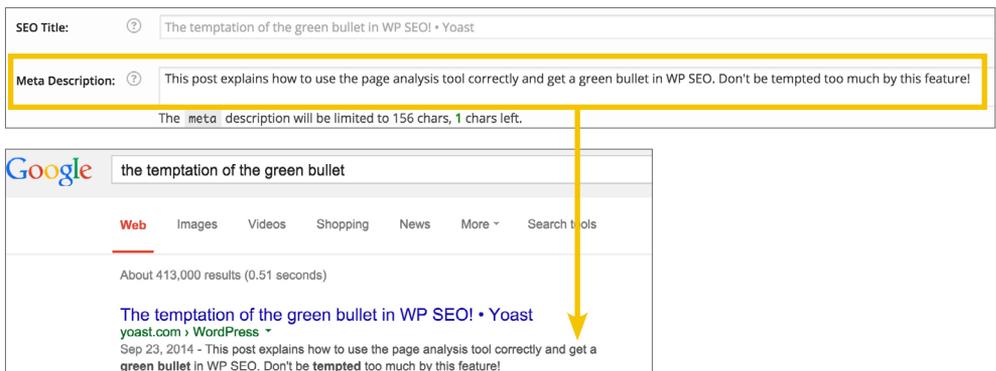


Figure 18: Meta Description

It's important that the focus keyword is contained in your meta description. Not because it will improve your rankings, but because otherwise Google won't show your meta description. Google will try to match the search query with the description, so if people search for your focus keyword and the focus keyword is not contained in the meta description, it'll just grab a random piece of content from your page containing the keyword.

The meta description shouldn't be too long, but there's no 'penalty' for having it be too long either. So what you should really optimize for is that logical bits of it are of the right length and that when it's cut in half, it still makes sense and still entices people to click.



Step 4: Finetune your headings

Look critically at your title, the headings and subheadings or your article. Do these contain your focus keyword? Can you alter them (without changing the structure or content of your article) in such a way that they will contain your focus keyword? Do not put your focus keyword in all of your headings! That is too much! Using your focus keyword in one heading and in your title should be enough. You can read more about headings in one of [Michiel's posts](#).

Step 5: Finetune your text

You should also mention your focus keyword in the text a couple of times. Make sure to mention it in the first paragraph. Throughout the text, you should mention it again. As a general rule of thumb: try to use your search terms in about 1 to 2 percent of your text. Make sure your articles have a minimum of 300 words. So in an article of 300 words, you should mention your search terms 3 to 6 times. The minimum of 300 words isn't an exact science, nor is the amount of keyword mentions, but 300 is a decent minimum number of words for an article that needs to show authority.

Yoast Tip



Make sure you add pictures or illustrations to your text which fit the content of your story. When you use a picture in your article, always try to add an alt tag (containing your keyword) that is still descriptive of the image.



Step 6: Check your bullets!

Clicking on the Page Analysis tab will allow you to see which aspects of the search engine optimization process were successful. The green bullets show which aspects are good, while orange and red bullets indicate where you can improve your SEO strategy. You don't have to keep on optimizing until all of your bullets are green. In posts on yoast.com, we often have a few orange bullets and sometimes even one or two red bullets left. The overall bullet (the one on the upper right in the backend of your post) should be green. The overall bullet will become green if the majority of your SEO aspects are covered.

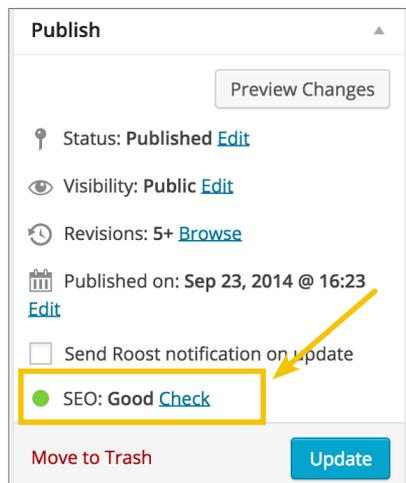


Figure 19: the overall bullet

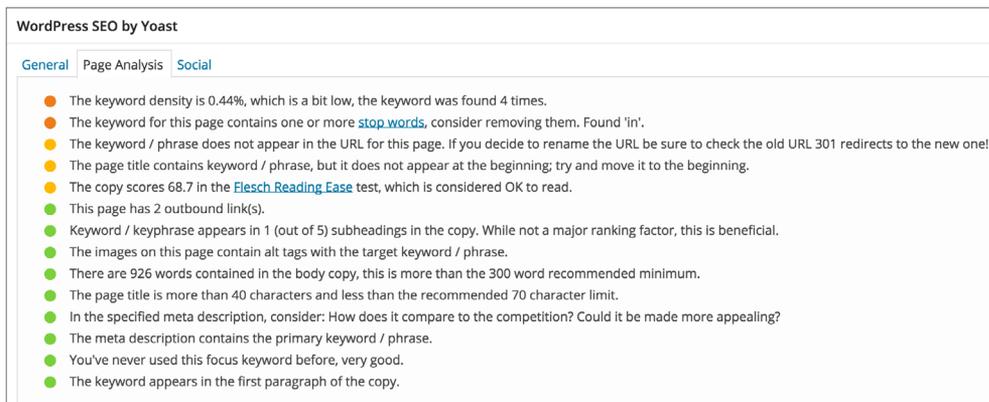


Figure 20: the (green) bullets in the Page Analysis tab



Step 7: Fill out the Social tab

The final tab in the WordPress SEO meta box is the Social tab. If you fill out a description or title for a social network on this tab, it's shown in the metadata for the page. This means this description, title or image will be shown when sharing the page on this social network. These descriptions basically have the same requirement as the meta description (which is what they fall back to), but can usually be longer. They should tell people what to expect; why they should click. Read more about [Social Media Optimization](#) in one of Joost's articles.

WordPress SEO by Yoast

General Page Analysis **Social**

Facebook Title:
If you don't want to use the post title for sharing the post on Facebook but instead want another title there, write it here.

Facebook Description:
If you don't want to use the meta description for sharing the post on Facebook but want another description there, write it here.

Facebook Image:
If you want to override the image used on Facebook for this post, upload / choose an image or add the URL here.

Twitter Title:
If you don't want to use the post title for sharing the post on Twitter but instead want another title there, write it here.

Twitter Description:
If you don't want to use the meta description for sharing the post on Twitter but want another description there, write it here.

Twitter Image:
If you want to override the image used on Twitter for this post, upload / choose an image or add the URL here.

Google+ Title:
If you don't want to use the post title for sharing the post on Google+ but instead want another title there, write it here.

Figure 21: Page Analysis Tool, Social tab



Epilogue

You have reached the end of this eBook. In the previous chapters, we have tried to shed some some light on the subject of content writing for the internet. If you are reading this, you will now have all the knowledge you need to write a great blog post, or an optimized page for your website from scratch. Besides that, you will know how to incorporate that post or page in the structure of your website and guide Google and your visitors to that page in a very natural manner. We believe this strategy and setup will help you a lot in ranking on the desired keywords in Google and trust they will bring you more visitors.

If you want to further optimize your content, you could think along the lines of template optimization or speed optimization. Especially for these kind of optimizations, we have developed a number of plugins that for instance add schema.org markup or OpenGraph markup to your website, like our [Video SEO](#) and [Local SEO](#) plugins. If you want to make sure all angles are covered, you should definitely check our [Website Reviews](#) as well.

We wish you all the luck and especially a lot of fun with writing your posts and optimizing your pages!

While writing this ebook, we had a lot of help and feedback from several colleagues of the Yoast-family! A special thanks to [Michiel Heijmans](#), [Mijke Peters](#) and [Thijs de Valk](#)!

Best Wishes,
Joost and Marieke

About the authors

Joost de Valk

Joost de Valk (1982) is a web developer, SEO and online marketer. He started his career in IT working at several companies, ranging from enterprise hosting to online marketing agencies, allowing him to work with several large businesses around the world.

Joost founded CSS3.info, the biggest CSS3 resource on the web, in 2006 and sold it in 2009. Early 2010 he built Quix, which was featured in many online publications from Mashable to Life-hacker and ReadWriteWeb.



In May of 2010 Joost founded Yoast, which focuses on software development (currently mainly WordPress plugins) and consulting in SEO, WordPress optimization and online marketing/content strategy. Current clients include the Guardian, eBay, Disney Interactive and the European Patent Office. Yoast sells multiple [WordPress plugins](#), [Website Reviews](#) and [eBooks](#) and is expanding quickly.

Marieke van de Rakt

Marieke van de Rakt (1981) studied Sociology and Communication Sciences at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. Subsequently, she worked on a dissertation about the criminal careers of fathers and their children. She obtained her PhD in Social Sciences in January 2011. Since then, she has worked as a researcher and as a teacher at different companies and universities. As of September 2013, she focussed her attention solely on her activities at Yoast.

Having a solid academic background, Marieke focuses on (quantitative) research and on strategic management. Besides that, she loves to write texts and posts for yoast.com. Together with Joost, Michiel Heijmans and Thijs de Valk, she runs Yoast.

Marieke van de Rakt and Joost de Valk are married and live in Wijchen, the Netherlands. They have four wonderful children together.